Top kidnap suspect falls, confesses he shot Betti Sy

Story on PAGE A2

'Jueteng'-free country? Just a Christmas wish

ANAK NG JUETENG NAMAN! AKALA KO PA NAMAN...!?

By Christian V. Esguerra

WHAT was that again? The country's top cop may have to eat the words with which he vowed to eliminate "jueteng" in the country by Christmas Day.

JUETENG/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Grenade attacks shake Baghdad WORLD /A6
- JDV speakership in peril NEWS /A5
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email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph Friday, December 26, 2003 ★★ 44 pages / 5 sections / vol. 19 / no. 18 P15 website: www.inq7.net

Pope asks God: Save world from wars

VATICAN CITY—A frail Pope John Paul II, in his Christmas message to the world on Thursday, asked God to save humanity from the scourge of terrorism and wars which, he said, were laying waste to many parts of the planet.

The 83-year-old Polish Pope, marking the 26th Christmas of his pontificate, made his "Urbi et Orbi" address to thousands of people in a cold St. Peter's Square.

He read the address with difficulty, as opposed to his sermon at a midnight Mass the night before when his voice was clear and strong.

"Save us from the evils which rend humanity in these first years of the third millennium," he said, speaking from the steps of St. Peter's Basilica, the largest church in Christendom.

"Save us from the wars and armed conflicts which lay waste to whole areas of the world, from the scourge of terrorism and from the many forms of violence which assail the weak, the vulnerable."

Earlier, the Pope and other religious leaders urged the world to heed the Christmas message of peace, but new terror alerts rang out and guerrillas in Iraq launched fresh attacks.

"Too much blood is still being shed on earth," the leader of the world's one billion Catholics said at a Christmas midnight Mass in St. Peter's Basilica that once again tested his strength.

The Mass at Christendom's largest church was broadcast live to nearly 50 countries.

"Too much violence and too many conflicts trouble the peaceful coexistence of nations," he said, speaking slowly in Italian and reading a homily in a relatively clear voice.

The Pope, who has Parkinson's disease that makes it difficult for him to talk, seemed alert during the Mass, smiling as he blessed children from around the world who brought him symbolic gifts

POPE/ A8

POPE John Paul II blesses children during the midnight Christmas Mass in St. Peter's Basilica.

REUTERS

CPP purge victims seek justice, closure

'It would be like winning the lottery'

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

STA ROSA, Laguna—Amalia "Mel" Fudiranan has not seen her son Owel for 16 years, but she firmly believes he is alive.

"If he shows up on Christmas, I will be the happiest person," Mel, a housewife, said in an interview at her house. "It would be like winning the lottery."

Mel is now 60, and her only wish is to see her first-born, a youth organizer in the underground movement, again. "Even if I don't get rich."

She has several reasons to believe that Owel is alive and just somewhere else.

She cited "many reports" to that effect, including one from a friend of hers who claimed to have seen Owel in Dolores, Quezon, in 2000.

The friend, Lita from Balibago, Sta. Rosa, recalled Owel as saying that he was going to stand as godfather in a religious ceremony.

IT WOULD/ A8

KARLO Galang, then 5 months old, spends precious time with his father Gary, one of those killed in the CPP purge in 1988.

Families still hope loved ones are alive

(EDITOR'S NOTE: On the occasion of the 35th founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines today, the INQUIRER *is coming out with this special report on the bloody purges within the party in the 1980s. Hundreds of men and women who had dedicated their lives to what they believed was a noble cause were suspected of being government spies, tortured and killed in secret CPP camps. This is their story.)*

By Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

(First of five parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

LIKE most children who have never seen their father, Sol had longed to meet hers.

"Ma, doesn't Papa love me?" the then 4-year-old Sol would ask her mother Bernice Galang. "Why don't I have a photograph of Papa and me together, like Kuya does?"

"Kuya" is Sol's elder brother Karlo, who has a picture with his father when he was a 5-month-old baby, but who has not seen him since he was about a year old.

"Ma, when is Papa coming back?" Karlo, then 5, would ask. "I envy a friend of mine because he plays basketball with his father."

Bernice had to learn basketball so she could assume the role of the "father" that her son wished he could play ball with.

At that time, Sol and Karlo had already been told that their father Gary had passed away. But their young minds could not understand that he was not coming home.

Now 15, Sol wonders how it is to have both parents around—something that many children take for granted. "I don't know how it feels to have a father," she said.

Neither does Alleyne, whose father Josemarie "Kristo" Enriquez died when she was 2 years old. Until she was 11, she was made to understand that her father was working abroad—initially in Saudi Arabia and later in the United States.

Alleyne, Sol and Karlo are among the children who lost a parent in the bloody purges that

CPP/ A8

Impeach signatory backs Erap trip to US

By Armand N. Nocum

A SIGNATORY to the impeachment complaint in 2000 against then President Joseph Estrada agrees that the ousted leader should be allowed to seek medical treatment in the United States for "humanitarian" considerations.

Evelyn Kilayko, head of the Concerned Women of the Philippines, said Estrada had already suffered a lot in jail for more than two years.

"As a Christian, we must practice charity, especially now with love in the air," Kilayko said, noting that even Church officials favored the Sandiganbayan decision allowing Estrada to travel to the United States in the first week of January to have his arthritic knees operated on.

"If the Church supports it, I don't have a problem with that," she said.

But other groups that helped oust Estrada, who is charged with plunder, a capital offense, called the anti-graft court's ruling "an act of betrayal."

Dr. Kristin Trenas, convenor of PlunderWatch-Panay, said the court order "trivialized" the Edsa II uprising that ousted Estrada.

Estrada can avail himself of the treatment for his knees in the country because Filipino doctors are capable of performing the surgery, according to Trenas.

Jeffrey Celiz, chair of the militant Bagong Alyansang Mak-

IMPEACH/ A9

LEYTE LANDSLIDE TRAGEDY

Politicians hamper relief distribution work

By Jani Arnaiz and Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

SAN FRANCISCO, Southern Leyte—Tragedy befell landslide victims twice over in Barangay Punta in this town as several politicians tried to gain mileage out of the disaster.

Distribution of relief goods was hampered when wards of Southern Leyte Rep. Aniceto Saludo insisted that the items be placed at the disposal of his ally, Mayor Diego Yuboc.

"It's unfair that goods intended for San Francisco are placed at the disposal of the vice mayor, while the ones in Liloan and San Ricardo are with the mayors," an official of the Provincial Social Welfare Department (PSWD) quoted Saludo's daughter Marissa as telling them.

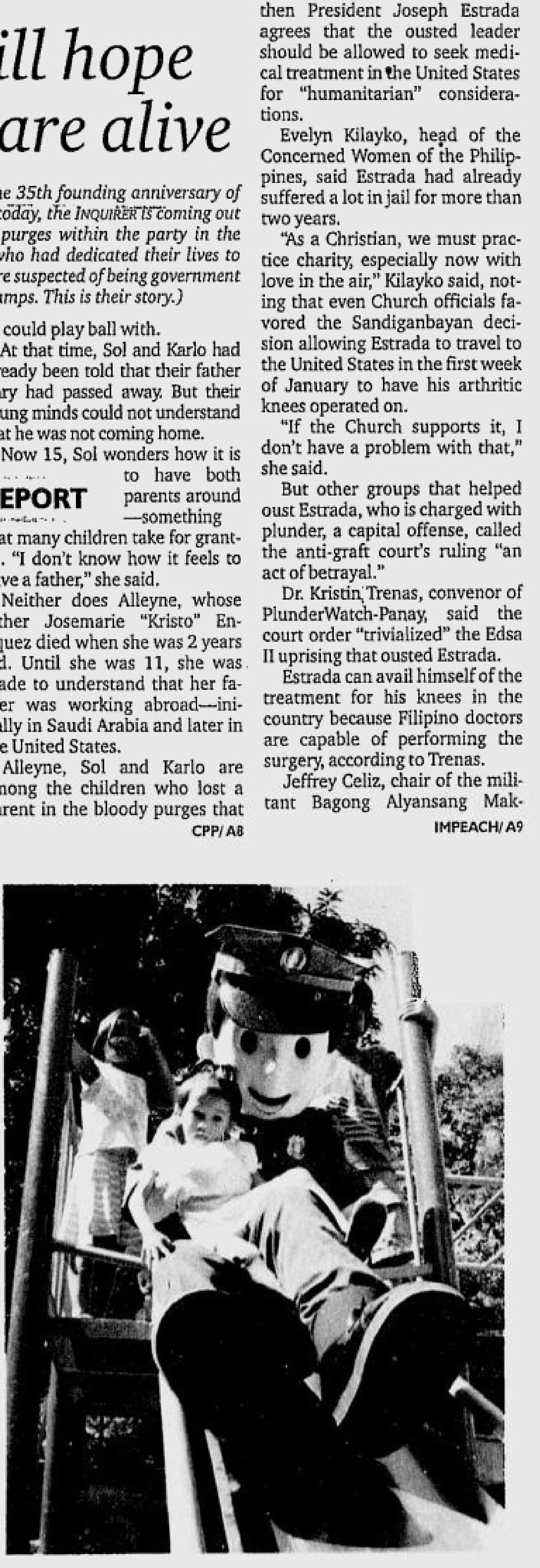
Nearly 200 people were killed in Liloan, San Ricardo and San Francisco towns as "abnormally" heavy rains triggered landslides and flooding last week. The towns are located on Panaon Island, which is connected to the mainland by the Liloan Bridge.

Punta was the worst-hit village where 71 bodies had been recovered and at least 20 more were believed to have been buried in mud, soil and debris.

The PSWD official, who requested anonymity, complained about the meddling in the distribution of relief goods to Liloan Mayor Zenaida Maamo. But the local town executive, who sent in the goods to San Francisco on Sunday, reportedly told the official to just give in.

Earlier, the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Center had instructed that the relief items be dropped at the parish church or

POLITICIANS / A9



KIDDIES' COP

A mascot leads policemen in sharing Christmas with street children at the Bernardo Park police station in Quezon City.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Rescuers find 7 more boat survivors

SEVEN more survivors of the ill-fated ML Pia-ry have been rescued off Malaysia and Palawan as the Navy and Coast Guard stepped up their rescue operations near the country's maritime border with Malaysia.

Navy and Coast Guard officials said a total of 27 survivors had been accounted for. Search and rescue teams have also recovered an unidentified body near the site of the sinking of the wooden-hulled vessel. Forty-seven of the 75 passengers and crew members of the ML Pia-ry are still missing.

The 69-ton Pia-ry, which was headed for Brookes Point, sank in stormy seas on Sunday. It left Mapun in Cagayan de Tawi-Tawi, a cluster of islets in the Sulu Sea, on Saturday afternoon despite the inclement weather.

Commander Geronimo Malabanan, Navy spokesperson, said Task Force Peacock recovered four survivors at Sibugo Island near Banguez, Malaysia, on Wednesday afternoon.

Malabanan said the four—Hadji Kaisar, 35, Mallih Iddig, 38, Muddazil Sulkily, 37, and Rochelle Dajao, 29—were later brought by a motor launch to Mangsee Island, the country's southernmost island where the Navy maintains a station.

Malabanan said a motor launch picked up three other still unidentified survivors at Bangkalan Island and brought them to Brookes Point.

He said a Navy Islander plane spotted two floating bodies 8 km south of Banguey Island at 2:45 p.m. on Wednesday afternoon. One of the bodies was recovered by the BRP Carlos Albert, a Navy patrol boat.

The BRP Quezon, BRP Liberato Picar, BRP Carlos Albert and BRP

RESCUERS / A9

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming widespread over Bicol Region and Eastern Visayas. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rains.
SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/26/03

Betti Sy triggerman falls, confesses

By Christian V. Esguerra

POLICE gave the family of slain Coca-Cola executive Betti Chua Sy a last-minute Christmas present with the arrest of the top suspect in her abduction and killing last month.

Elinzenio Saliente was nabbed at a checkpoint on the San Juanico Bridge in Barangay Cabalawan, Tacloban, Leyte, shortly before 2 p.m. the other day.

Police intelligence chief Senior Supt. Ismael Rafanan said Saliente confessed during an interrogation that he was the one who shot Sy.

Saliente is a member of the Alan Niegas kidnap gang, reportedly a splinter group of the notorious Waray syndicate.

Sy's abduction on Nov. 17 set off a string of kidnap cases in Metro Manila. Four days later, a 10-year-old girl was snatched in front of her school in Paco, Manila. This was followed by another incident in nearby Muntinlupa, and then another in Chinatown, rattling authorities and prompting President Macapagal-Arroyo to order a crackdown on kidnap gangs, on top of tougher anti-crime measures.

Chief Supt. Dionisio Coloma, police director for Region 8, said his men, along with operatives of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force and Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response, had acted on information that Saliente and other gang members were vacationing in Leyte. The team set up a blockade on San Juanico and intercepted a Manila-bound bus carrying the suspect.

Police assets identified one of the passengers as the kidnap gang member that the authorities had been looking for. Saliente was with his girlfriend, Tricia Gutierrez. They yielded a 38-caliber revolver with six bullets.

The two were flown to the Philippine National Police headquarters in Camp Crame in Quezon City yesterday morning.

With the arrest of Saliente, Coloma said, his men were now closing in on at least five other members of the Niegas gang. Initial information on their whereabouts, he said, were provided by the gang leader himself, who was arrested in Leyte last Dec. 4.

Niegas is one of four top kidnap syndicate leaders, each with a P1-million prize on his head, in NAKTF's order of battle. Another one, Dr. Roberto Obeles Yap, was killed in a shoot-out in Dinalupihan, Bataan, last Nov. 20. The two others, Rolando and Harold Fajardo, remain at large.

NAKTF earlier arrested six suspects believed to be among 20 Waray gang members behind the Sy abduction and murder. Among them were Ernesto Palla, Ramon Dimol, and Romeo Vallano, who is said to have admitted that he drove the victim to the group's hideout in Cavite.

Sy, 32, was seized in Quezon City while on the way to work. A gunman shot through the door of her Toyota Rav 4 after she apparently refused to open it, hitting her leg and arm. Police are convinced that the victim bled to death on the way to Cavite. Vallano told probers that her body was wrapped in a blanket and plastic bag in the hideout before it was dumped in Parañaque City the following morning. *With a report from AP*

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SC asked to revive case vs Danding

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE OMBUDSMAN has asked the Supreme Court to order the arraignment of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco Jr. on criminal charges that he acted as a dummy for the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the Bulletin Today and Liwayway publishing firms during the martial law years.

In a 41-page petition, the Ombudsman, through the Office of the Special Prosecutor, asked the high court to reverse a Sandiganbayan decision last month that nullified the criminal case against Cojuangco for violating the country's anti-graft law.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio noted that the Sandiganbayan came out with its decision even though it had set the date of Cojuangco's arraignment and issued an arrest warrant against him.

The anti-graft court dismissed the case against Cojuangco after it ruled that the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), which initiated the charges, had no authority to conduct the preliminary investigation in the case.

The case started in 1989 after the PCGG found that he was acting as a dummy for Marcos in Bulletin Today Publishing Co. and Liwayway Publishing Inc. from 1973 to 1975.

In an amended information submitted to the Sandiganbayan, the PCGG alleged that Cojuangco, Cesar Zalamea and Jose Campos, deposited nine checks for more than P30 million issued to them by Bulletin, to one of Marcos' 77 accounts in Security Bank and Trust Co. from June to August 1985.

On June 8, 1990, the Sandiganbayan issued an arrest warrant against Cojuangco, who appealed to the Supreme Court.

But on June 19, 2001, the SC denied Cojuangco's petition and ordered the anti-graft court to resume proceedings against him and rule on the case "with deliberate dispatch."

The Sandiganbayan later set Cojuangco's arraignment on Sept. 18, 2002. But on the day of the arraignment, the anti-graft court instead ordered the prosecution to submit a memorandum to support its claim that the Sandiganbayan had jurisdiction over the case.

Then on April 24, 2003, it nullified the case against Cojuangco. The prosecution's motion for reconsideration was denied on Nov. 20.

PCGG girds for court battle over $22M

THE GOVERNMENT is ready for another court battle with the Marcoses, this time to recover a portion of the $683-million Marcos ill-gotten Swiss deposits that are being withheld by a bank in Singapore.

Presidential Commission on Good Government officials said the Philippine National Bank has appointed its legal team that would recover the $22 million from the Singaporean branch of the German bank West LB.

The bank has said it wants a Singaporean court to determine the rightful owner of the deposit: the Marcoses, the Philippine government, or the about 10,000 martial law victims who were awarded $2 billion in damages by a US district court in 1994.

The $22 million is part of the $683-million Marcos Swiss deposits which the Supreme Court forfeited in favor of the government last July 15. The ruling became final on Nov. 18.

The funds have been in an escrow account with the PNB since 1997, when the Swiss Federal Supreme Court turned them over.

PCGG officials said that while the money now belongs to the government, it is mainly the PNB's job to recover the $22 million since it was the escrow agent.

The rest of the $683 million Swiss deposits have been recalled by the PNB, which is just waiting for the Supreme Court's decision to become executory, according to the PCGG.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4614 Series of 2003

Docs fear infection; only Robot's lawyer can visit him

By TJ Burgonio

MILITARY doctors have further limited visits to captured Abu Sayyaf leader Galib Andang at a military hospital in Quezon City to avoid aggravating infection in his wounded right leg.

The military has so far given only lawyer Oliver Lozano access to the intensive care unit of the V. Luna Medical Center, where Andang is recuperating from operations, including an amputation of the left leg, and being treated for other wounds.

But even Lozano's visits, which happened only twice last week, were limited to several minutes by the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), according to Col. Rafael Regino, military surgeon general.

"We have limited visitations in order not to spread infection. We are afraid that a cross-infection might occur," he said in a phone interview, hinting that his right leg was prone to infection because it was "contaminated."

On-and-off fever

Andang, alias Commander Robot, has "on-and-off fever," but showed no signs that he would experience sepsis (blood poisoning). Otherwise, his vital signs are normal, according to Regino.

"He's in good condition today," he said.

The 36-year-old Andang, who led the abduction of 21 tourists, mostly Europeans, from a diving resort in Sipadan, Malaysia in April 2000, was brought to the military hospital a day after his Dec. 7 capture in Indanan, Sulu where he was shot in an encounter.

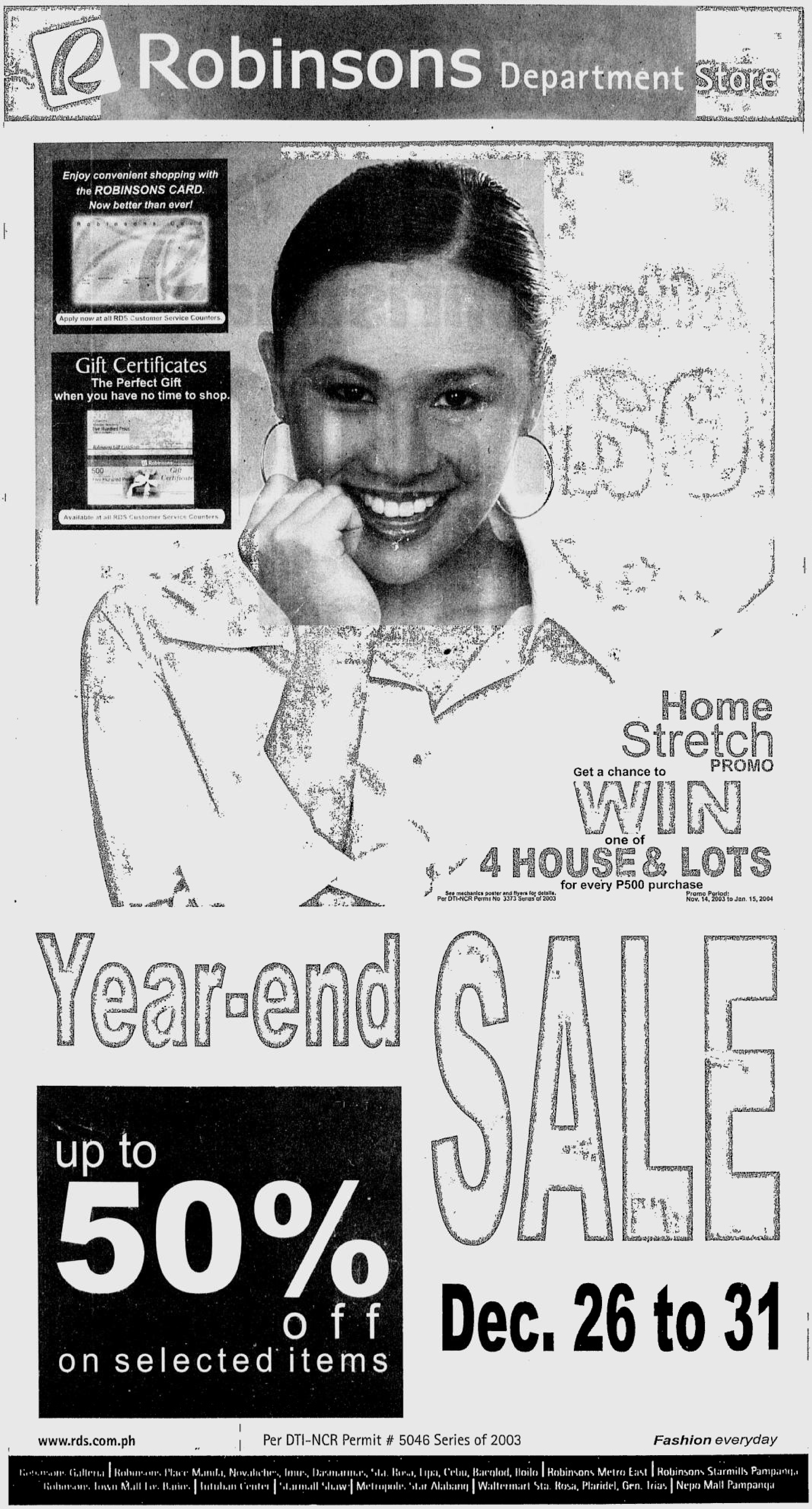
In view of his present condition, the Isafp and other intelligence agents from foreign countries who have been itching to grill him for his role in the abduction of foreigners would have to wait until he fully recovers.

No go signal

"The doctors have not given us the go signal to interrogate him because his fever rises every now and then. Hopefully, he recovers soon. By that time, we might be given the go signal to do it," said an intelligence official, who asked not to be named.

Andang disclosed some information about the Abu Sayyaf operations shortly after his capture, but it was not "as detailed as it should be," the official added.

Apart from Malaysia, the French, German and Finnish governments have also expressed interest in sending their own men to question the bandit leader. The military, however, said it would just share results of the interrogation.



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Loren willing to sacrifice VP ambition

By Michael Lim Ubac

SENATE Majority Leader Loren Legarda yesterday said she was willing to make "personal sacrifices" just to ensure a united opposition in the 2004 presidential election.

"I would really rather see the opposition united than fragmented," said Legarda as she called on Senators Panfilo Lacson and Edgardo Angara to sit down and find a common ground to unite "for the sake of country."

Asked whether she would be willing to give up her vice presidential slot, she said: "I will be willing to do anything ... even to sacrifice my personal interest. Politics is really secondary to me. That's not my life. I simply want to serve."

The INQUIRER has confirmed that the Fernando Poe Jr.-Legarda tandem is already a done deal, but the Lacson-Angara row is keeping the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino from formally announcing the ticket.

Legarda said she had high regard for Lacson whom she described as a "qualified and credible leader."

"But I also respect Mr. Poe who has been proven in his field and he has tons of charisma, which can unify the country," said Legarda, adding that "at the end of the day, or of the year, the elusive unity will be found."

Legarda confirmed yesterday that she was informed that the coalition might move the filing of candidacy of the movie king from Dec. 29 to Jan. 5, the last day of the filing of certificates of candidacy, presumably as a last-ditch attempt to get Lacson on board the opposition ship.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, December 26, 2003
Stephen, First Martyr

1st Reading:	Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Gospel:	Mt 10:17-22

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be on your guard with respect to people, for they will hand you over to their courts and they will flog you in their synagogues. You will be brought to trial before rulers and kings because of me, and so you may witness to them and the pagans.

"But when you are arrested, do not worry about what you are to say and how you are to say it; when the hour comes, you will be given what you are to say. For it is not you who will speak; but it will be the Spirit of your Father in you.

"Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child; children will turn against parents and have them put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved."

Commentary

The joy and laughter of Christmas are still fresh, and already blood and violence crowd their way into our consciousness. Perhaps the Church has placed the feast of Stephen the first martyr so soon after the merriment of Christmas to keep us realistic and to prevent our celebration from becoming a mere escape from the harsh facts of the world. Perhaps too, we are being reminded of what Christmas means most deeply. Stephen died as Jesus did, accused of blasphemy, forgiving his enemies, entrusting his spirit. His way of dying mirrored Jesus' way of dying. Surely, then, we glimpse in Stephen what the goal of the Incarnation is: God in Jesus sharing our humanity, so that, we, in turn, might share Jesus' way of being human, his way of living, loving, yes, and even dying.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LABOR LAW (LABOR RELATIONS LAW)/CRIMINAL LAW—In illegal recruitment, prosecution has the burden of proof—In the appreciation of evidence in criminal cases, it is a basic tenet that the prosecution has the burden of proof in establishing the guilt of the accused for the offense with which he is charged. Ei incumbit probation qui dicit non qui negat, i.e., "he who asserts, not he who denies, must prove." The conviction of appellant must rest not on the weakness of his defense, but on the strength of the prosecution's evidence. In the case at bar, the prosecution failed to adduce sufficient evidence to prove appellant's active participation in the illegal recruitment activities of the agency. As already established, appellant received the processing fees of the private complainants for and in behalf of Mrs. Reyes who ordered her to receive the same. She neither gave an impression that she had the ability to deploy them abroad nor convinced them to part with their money. More importantly, she had no knowledge that the license was suspended the day before she received the money. Their failure to depart for Taiwan was due to the suspension of the license, an event which appellant did not have control of. Her failure to refund their money immediately upon their demand was because the money had been remitted to Mrs. Reyes on the same day she received it from them. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Ynares-Santiago, First Division, People vs Corpuz, G. R. No. 148198, October 1, 2003] BY R. B. VERA

JDV speakership in peril in '04

By Carlito Pablo

CAN comeback kid Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. do it again and stay at the top of the next Congress?

De Venecia, who turns 67 today, had staged a successful return to the speakership of the House in 2001, three years after losing in the 1998 presidential elections.

But De Venecia is facing a serious challenge for the mace at the hands of the so-called Young Turks when the 13th Congress opens for session in June 2004.

Composed of young legislators identified with the so-called Spice Boys and the Brat Pack, these congressmen are at the head of the incoming third-term lawmakers in the House who want to elect among themselves a new Speaker.

Echoing talks in the halls of Congress, Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales (Akbayan) said that three young lawmakers are poised to challenge De Venecia for the seat at the rostrum.

Rosales said that these are Representatives Rolando Andaya (Lakas, Camarines Sur), Robert Ace Barbers (Lakas, Surigao del Norte) and Francis Escudero (NPC, Sorsogon).

'Good fight'

"It's true that Speaker De Venecia is in for a good fight," Rosales said.

Andaya and Barbers, both 34, currently chair powerful committees in the House, appropriations and accounts, respectively; and are members of the high-profile Spice Boys.

Escudero, also 34, is the spokesperson of the Nationalist People's Coalition, and is among the so-called Brat Pack who led the impeachment of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr.

Estimates of incoming third-term congressmen range from a low of 50 to a high of 80, and they count on the support of incoming second-term legislators.

The Speaker is elected by a majority of all members of the House, currently numbering 220, at the commencement of each Congress or whenever there is a vacancy.

Rosales, however, noted that challengers to De Venecia won't have a walk in the park.

"We have to concede that Speaker De Venecia is the politician's politician," Rosales said. "He has the experience and the expertise."

'Clever, visionary'

In grudging admiration, Rosales added: "Speaker De Venecia is clever and he is a visionary."

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) said challenges against a sitting Speaker is "always a perennial issue."

"To a significant extent, the next Speaker will depend on who will become the next President of the country," Pichay said in a separate interview.

Pichay noted that experience and leadership in Congress, which he said De Venecia has proved through the years, will also be a measure in deciding who will sit as Speaker of the 13th Congress.

In the political hierarchy, the Speaker is the fourth highest official of the land, after the President, Vice President and Senate President.

The Speaker presides over the sessions of the House and signs all acts, resolutions and other measures issued by the House.

De Venecia had survived an ouster move at the height of House debates on the impeachment of Davide last November.

De Venecia had won praises for his statesmanly leadership of the chamber in quashing the impeachment.

De Venecia is filing his certificate of candidacy this December for reelection as congressman of the 4th district of Pangasinan.

De Venecia sat as Speaker in the 9th and 10th Congress during the Ramos administration.

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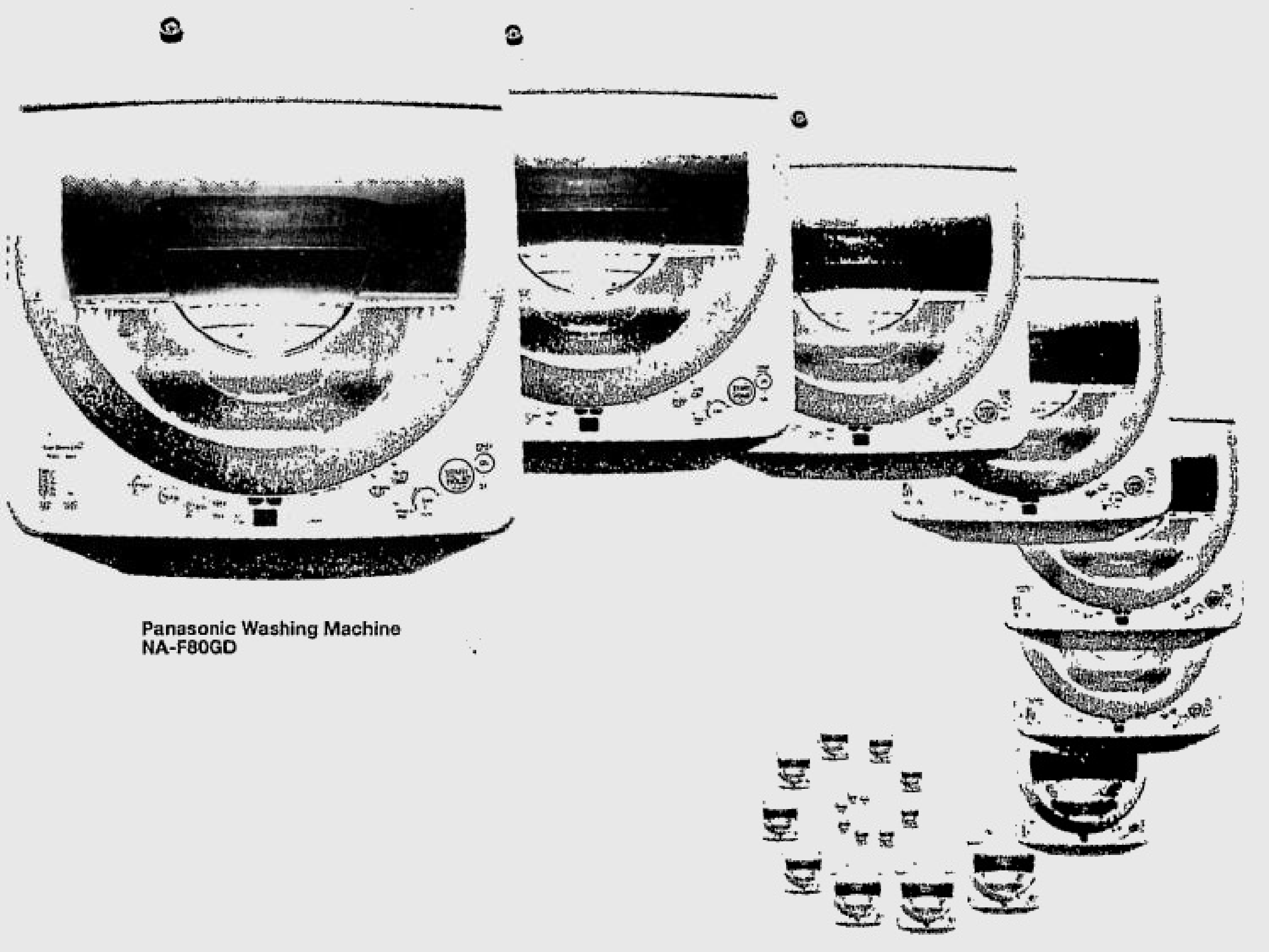

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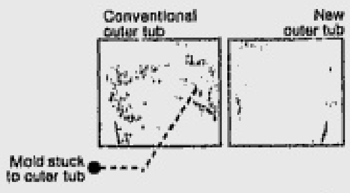

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Pyongyang increases military spending

SEOUL—North Korea spent more on its military than originally budgeted this year to boost "offensive and defensive" strike capabilities in the face of mounting tensions with the United States over its nuclear weapons programs, a top North Korean official said Thursday.

Ro Tu Chol, vice premier of the Cabinet, said the increased spending was crucial to preserving its "nuclear deterrent force" despite US-backed international pressure on the North to give up its nuclear ambitions.

North Korea's lifting of its self-imposed freeze on developing nuclear weapons was possible only because the country's defense industry had been "reinforced to successfully manufacture modern offensive and defensive means, its own type military hardware of high performance," Ro told North Korea's KCNA news agency.

To ramp up production of fuel, electricity and equipment for the North Korean military during the yearlong standoff with Washington, North Korea spent 0.5 percent more than originally budgeted for the military, Ro said.

In March, North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly had allotted 15.4 percent of its budget to the military, up from 14.4 percent the previous year. North Korea did not announce the budget's total dollar amount.

The crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons programs worsened throughout 2003 and finally stalled this month without a much hoped-for new round of talks to end the standoff. *AP*

Grenade attacks shake Baghdad

BAGHDAD—Guerrillas hit central Baghdad with more than a dozen grenades and mortar shells, shattering the dawn of Christmas Day with blasts that struck the Ishtar Sheraton and the gates of a US Army base. One woman was wounded as she slept in an apartment neighboring the hotel.

On Wednesday, anti-American insurgents made good on a threatened Christmas offensive, detonating a series of bombs that killed four US soldiers, six civilians and a suicide bomber.

They were the deadliest attacks since Saddam Hussein's Dec. 13 capture. A 1st Armored infantry company investigating the Sheraton blast found leaflets warning Iraqis to stay home during the coming rebel offensive, Muniz said. The leaflets also warned US forces to leave the country and Iraqi police to stop working with foreign occupiers, Army Lt. Kurt Muniz said.

"I guess they think security's going to be downgraded because of the holiday," said Muniz, 26, of Queens, New York. "If they want to bring it, I say bring it on."

Early Thursday, distant explosions were heard as the US military bombarded suspected rebel positions.

Thursday's first rebel strike was against the Sheraton, a 19-story hotel on the banks of the Tigris River filled with Western contractors and journalists. Gunfire erupted immediately after the explosion.

Bystanders said a security guard fired at men in a pickup truck who had launched the grenades, but they fled. Late Wednesday, the Sheraton escaped a 60-mm mortar shell because it exploded off an outer wall of the heavily barricaded hotel, according to Capt. Jason Beck of the US Army's 1st Armored Division.

A US military spokesperson confirmed "several rocket and mortar attacks" across central Baghdad overnight, including "three or four impacts" inside the green zone, a barricaded west Baghdad neighborhood that contains the Republican Palace and other headquarters buildings occupied by the US-led administration of Iraq.

Attackers fired five grenade rounds apparently intended for the nearby Baghdad Hotel, but all exploded harmlessly, Muniz said. Guerrillas also fired a pair of grenades at the gate of a 1st Armored Division base in east Baghdad.

A crowd gathered in the hall outside the apartment hit by the grenade apparently meant for the Sheraton. Two young girls, shaken by the blast that injured their mother, peeked out the door.

"I heard a woosh sound and the last one hit us," said one man, who blamed the Americans for the lack of security. "Iraq is not Palestine," the man said, giving his name only as Abdullah. "Americans are the problem."

On Wednesday morning, three US soldiers were killed by a roadside bomb that hit a military convoy near Samarra, a town north of Baghdad where insurgents have often launched attacks.

A fourth soldier, from the Army's 1st Armored Division, was killed later Wednesday when a bomb exploded during a raid in a north-central Baghdad neighborhood, the military said Thursday.

In northern Iraq, a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-packed car in front of the Kurdish interior ministry in the city of Irbil, near Kirkuk, US Army Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt said in Baghdad. *AP*

AN IRAQI boy is all smiles after receiving a Christmas hat from a US soldier atop an armored vehicle in central Baghdad on Dec. 25. AFP

Europe's Mars Express in orbit

DARMSTADT, Germany—Europe's Mars Express went into orbit around the Red Planet early Thursday, but a Nasa spacecraft failed to pick up a signal from the companion Beagle 2 lander in its first attempt to confirm the probe's safe arrival.

The US Mars Odyssey orbiter passed over Beagle's landing site less than three hours after the craft's scheduled landing in the first of several shots controllers have at establishing contact.

"This is not the end of the story—this was the first opportunity," the European Space Agency's director of science, David Southwood, said at mission control. "Getting signals back from Mars is not a straightforward operation."

The next chance falls to Britain's Jodrell Bank Observatory, which will try to pick up the lander's call signal through its 36-meter radio telescope at 2245 GMT on Christmas Day.

"We're sure Beagle is down on the surface, and we just need to hear from it," Southwood said.

Working in tandem, the Beagle and Mars Express are meant to look for signs of past or present life on Mars.

Shortly before 0300 GMT, around the time the lander was supposed to arrive, the mother ship fired its engine to slow it enough for Mars' gravity to pull it into orbit. The maneuver is crucial for Beagle because the orbiter will relay the lander's data back to Earth.

Controllers detected a signal from a small antenna aboard Mars Express as it emerged from behind Mars on schedule at 5:11 a.m. *AP*

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WORLDBRIEFS

Musharraf survives new slay try

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan—At least seven people were killed and 16 wounded in a bomb attack in Pakistan on Thursday that appeared to be the second attempt to kill President Pervez Musharraf this month. Musharraf was not wounded by the two blasts in Rawalpindi city that went off on a road just after his convoy passed, officials said. "At least seven dead bodies have been brought into hospital along with 16 wounded," said an official of the Edhi Welfare Foundation, a private emergency service. "More are on the way." Musharraf narrowly escaped a bomb attack on the same road on Dec. 14. *Reuters*

163 dead in China gas field blast

BEIJING—China on Thursday raised the death toll from a blowout at a natural gas field in southwest China's Chongqing municipality to 163, state media said. The death toll, carried by the Xinhua news agency, was up from 133 announced shortly before and marked a dramatic increase from the eight dead reported earlier in the day. The accident happened on Tuesday night at the Chuandongbei gas field in Chongqing's Kaixian county, when a high concentration of natural gas and sulphurated hydrogen shot out of a burst well, Xinhua said.

Explosion destroys UN guesthouse

KABUL—A bomb blast destroyed the wall of a United Nations guesthouse close to the presidential palace in Kabul early Thursday but there were no casualties, the Afghan security service and international peacekeepers said. "A bomb exploded at around 4:50 a.m. this morning," intelligence officer Tajuddin said from the site. "It did not cause any casualties but destroyed the wall of a UN compound in first street, Shashdarak district," said Tajuddin. The bomb had been placed near the wall of the guesthouse compound, which is close to the heavily guarded presidential palace and International Security Assistance Force headquarters in central Kabul. The wall was totally destroyed by the blast which left a crater one meter across and smashed all the windows in the front of the guesthouse. *AFP*

German tabloid goes positive

BERLIN—Germany's top-selling newspaper published nothing but good news, dropping its normal fare of crime, violence and scandal for stories about tax cuts, falling petrol prices and accelerating economic growth. "There's only good news today," Bild said in large letters at the top of page one, where the headlines are usually devoted to sex scandals, Germany's cannibal trial, killers, adulterers or dishonest politicians. Bild columnist Peter Bacher said there was always plenty of good news around, even if it was "sometimes overshadowed by evil, horror and terror." The paper reported churches were full for Christmas services, California's earthquake spared San Francisco, President Johannes Rau appealed for more state money for families, share prices rose and political leaders promised more big tax cuts. Skipping its usual "loser of the day" entry, Bild picked two "winners of the day," including rock star Ozzy Osbourne who was released from intensive care in hospital after an accident in Britain. *Reuters*

$1-M fine for poisoned curry

TOKYO—A Japanese court on Thursday ordered a housewife to pay more than a million dollars in damages to relatives of people she killed and injured by serving them arsenic-laced curry. The Wakayama District Court in western Japan ordered 42-year-old Masumi Hayashi to pay 118 million yen ($1.1 million) in damages in a civil suit filed by bereaved families of three fatal victims and 38 poisoned neighbors. Two children and two adults died in agony hours after eating the curry and 63 others fell ill in 1998 in the bizarre case that gripped the nation. In her criminal trial, the same court a year ago sentenced Hayashi, a mother of four, to hang, finding her guilty of mixing arsenic into the curry in July 1998 at a community festival in Wakayama's Sonobe district. She has since appealed. *AFP*

Lone cow interrupts trade, worries beef-eaters in US

WASHINGTON—Awaiting final proof that the United States has its first case of mad cow disease, state and federal officials worked to prevent a potential outbreak of the deadly disease and calm public fears about the nation's food supply.

Conclusive test results on the cow from Washington state were expected by the end of the week from a British laboratory. In the meantime, government and cattle industry officials voiced assurances that the beef on American Christmas holiday tables was safe to eat.

"The risk to human life is extremely low," Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said.

People can get a disease similar to mad cow disease, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob (vCJD), if they eat meat that contains central nervous tissue from the brain or spine of a cow infected with mad cow disease, researchers believe. In Britain, 143 people have died of vCJD since a mad cow disease outbreak in the 1980s.

The biggest buyers of US beef around the world slapped bans on imports of the American product, and there were increasing doubts among a US populace that consumes an average 29 kg of beef a year. Humans can contract a fatal variant of mad cow disease by eating infected beef products.

"Once I heard that was going on I decided I wasn't eating any more beef or feeding it to my family," said Steve Fairbrother, 44, a disabled former truck driver who was shopping on Wednesday for groceries in Montgomery, Alabama. "I'm not taking any chances until I hear the government say there's no more of it."

To determine whether there is more, investigators want to find the herd the cow was raised with and what the herd was, since the cow likely was sickened from eating feed made partly from an infected cow. Authorities also want to know where the animals were transported.

USDA chief veterinarian Ron DeHaven said officials had identified two livestock markets in Washington where the animal could have been purchased, but he did not identify them.

Federal and state officials said the Holstein cow's last home was a large dairy operation in southern Washington state where it had been since 2001. Government sources said that the cow came from Sunny Dene Ranch in Mabton, Washington, a town 64 km south of Yakima.

Authorities also were scrambling to find where the meat cut from the animal was sent. The agriculture department already has issued a recall for 4,685 kg of beef slaughtered on Dec. 9 at Vern's Moses Lake Meat Co. in Moses Lake, Washington.

Veneman said the recall was an extra precaution.

Dr. Stanley Prusiner, a neurologist at the University of California at San Francisco who discovered the proteins that cause mad cow disease, told The New York Times he warned Veneman recently that it was "just a matter of time" before the disease was found in the United States. *AP*

Bird flu spreads in S. Korea

SEOUL—More South Korean farmers reported suspected bird flu among ducks nationwide on Thursday as authorities struggled to test and contain the highly contagious disease.

The latest cases of avian influenza—which in rare cases can be deadly to humans—have been traced to duck-breeding farms in South Cholla province, home to half of South Korea's eight million ducks.

The agriculture ministry said about half of the target of one million chickens and ducks had been slaughtered and buried. The total includes thousands of chickens which died instantly after contracting the flu.

"A total 19 suspected cases are being tested including the newly reported cases," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said there were three fresh reports of suspected cases from farmers in Cholla province's Naju, 275 km southwest of Seoul, and two more from duck farms 24 km away from the first confirmed case.

The country confirmed its first case of bird flu among chickens at a farm about 80 km southeast of the capital on Dec. 15.

Since the outbreak, cases have been confirmed at 11 poultry farms across South Korea, the ministry said.

To cope with falling poultry prices, the ministry said the government would buy 100,000 to 300,000 ducks and chickens per day for one month.

"A sharp decline in poultry consumption has led to about a 30 to 40 percent drop in market prices since the bird flu outbreak," the ministry said.

"To help settle oversupply due to falling consumption, the government will purchase poultry, while buying and destroying eggs as well," it added.

Poultry prices fell to 616 won ($0.514) per kilogram on Wednesday from 991 won on Dec. 10, the ministry said. *Reuters*

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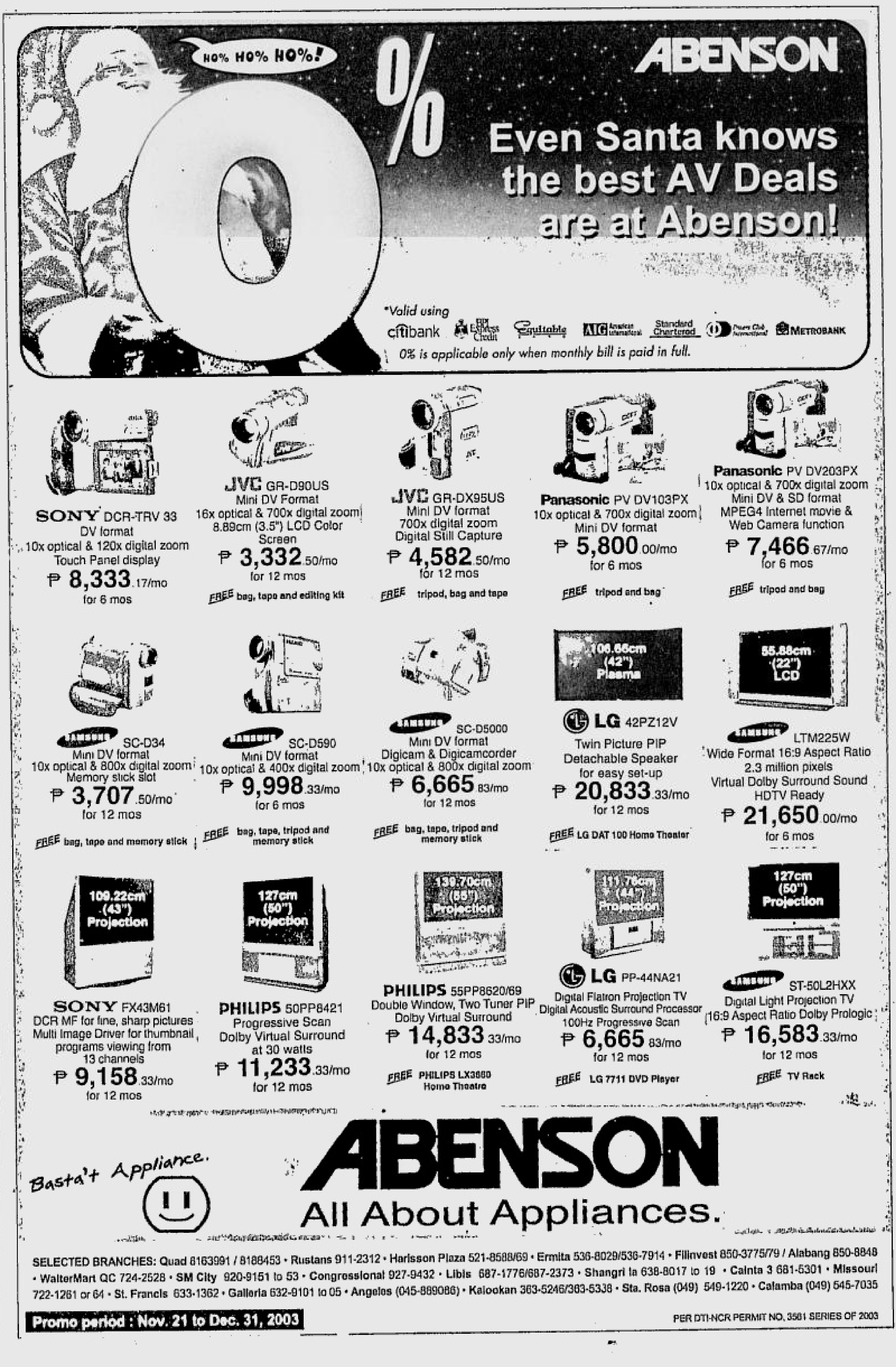

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CPP purge victims seek justice, closure

From page A1

swept the country's underground communist movement between 1982 and 1989. *(See box on this page.)*

"How can I explain this to my friends?" said Alleyne, now 17.

The campaign of the Communist Party of the Philippines against suspected deep-penetration agents (DPAs) of the military killed at least a thousand of its cadres, fighters, and trade union, community and youth organizers, as well as non-party members, including peasants and church workers.

Scores survived but they carry scars of physical and mental torture, and memories of how their comrades died in the hands of fellow comrades.

Many of the survivors eventually left the movement. But some stayed on to wage a "people's war," now Asia's longest-running communist insurgency.

The CPP would later acknowledge that the victims had not been established as military spies.

Kristo, head of the party's District 6 in Manila, which at the time comprised Paco, Pandacan and Sta. Mesa, died in 1988 in Metro Manila. Also in that year, Gary, an organizer of out-of-school youth, was killed in Southern Tagalog.

Buried in unmarked graves, their remains, like those of hundreds of others, have yet to be found.

Love at first sight

Before he joined the underground movement, Gary was organizing students at a university in Manila in the early 1980s. He later moved to the schools of his hometown, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Gary and Bernice's paths crossed in 1984, a year after the assassination of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr.

"We met in Los Baños [in Laguna] while we were setting up a chapter of a national student organization in Southern Tagalog," said Bernice, then a sophomore majoring in biology at the University of the Philippines at Los Baños (UPLB).

"*Na*-LFS [love at first sight] *ako sa 'yo*," Gary had told her.

Bernice laid down a condition: Gary had to join the CPP before they could marry.

He did, and on Aug. 17, 1986, they got married in Pagsanjan, Laguna. She was 22, and he, 23.

Organizing work for Gary in Laguna and for Bernice in Quezon kept them apart most of the time. They usually saw each other once in three months.

A year after marriage, Bernice gave birth to a boy they named Karlo.

PHIL Galang, younger sister of Bernice, left the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, Laguna, to join the communist underground movement. Two years after joining the CPP, she died not in a fire fight with the military but at the hands of her former comrades.

MIMI Galang, youngest sister of Bernice, was able to attend part of the *pasiyam* (nine-day novena) for their father on Aug. 16, 1988. She has not visited her mother and elder sister since then. She died in Operation Missing Link, the anti-infiltration campaign of the CPP in Southern Tagalog.

Bernice was two months pregnant with daughter Sol on March 24, 1988, when Gary, by then a mechanical engineering graduate of Adamson University, told her that he was entertaining the idea of working in the Middle East.

"*Kailangan nating ayusin ang pamilya natin kasi buntis ka at kailangan mag-aral ang mga anak natin* (We need to get our family in order because you are pregnant and our children will have to go to school)," Bernice recalled her husband as telling her.

Dedicated to the party then, she told Gary that she would end their marriage if he left the underground movement. "If that's what you want, it's OK with me. But you will have to forget our relationship. I married you because we shared the same principles," she said.

Bernice recalled that Gary had tears in his eyes when he replied: "I married you not because of the revolution. I would have still married you even if there was no revolution."

Faltering commitment

At the time, Gary was feeling that his commitment to the revolution was faltering because of his worries about his family's future. The month before, hoping to be recharged, he had requested that he be allowed to go on a six-month "exposure" program in a guerrilla zone in Southern Tagalog.

His request was approved in less than a month—a record of sorts because approval for some requests took a year, according to Bernice.

When he was about to go into the guerrilla zone on March 25, 1988, Gary asked his wife to accompany him to the drop-off point. "*Hindi mo man lang ba ako ihahatid* (You're not even going to see me off)?" he told her while they were on a bus.

But Bernice begged off because of a previous appointment.

"He said, '[That group] is more important to you than me.' I felt he was just being emotional," she recalled.

She had no inkling then that she was seeing her husband for the last time.

Bernice first learned about Gary's fate in January 1989, 10 months after the last time they were together. She did not believe the bearer of bad news.

She accepted the death of her husband only when Gary's former political officer, a survivor of Operation Missing Link (OPML), the anti-infiltration campaign in Southern Tagalog, told her about what had happened.

Anger at the perpetrators is usually the first reaction of a victim's loved one, according to Bernice. But not for her.

Sisters, too

"My immediate feeling was: How can the party achieve its dream if its members are killing fellow comrades?" she said.

Gary was not the only loved one Bernice lost to the OPML. She also lost her two younger sisters, Phil and Mimi.

Phil, a UPLB student, was 17, and Mimi, a high school graduate who passed the aptitude test but did not enroll at the UPLB, was 16 when they joined the underground movement.

While she can wax philosophical about her husband's death, Bernice is tormented by feelings of guilt over what happened to her sisters.

"Why did I let them join the movement? Why did I allow them to go full-time? Why didn't I stop them?" she lamented.

When her father died on Aug. 16, 1988, Bernice and her mother decided to extend the wake in the hope that Phil and Mimi would come. Mimi was able to catch part of the *pasiyam* (nine-day novena).

"I cried and cried on the day she left," Bernice said. "I followed her the next day to a safe house in [a town in Laguna]. But she had left. I felt then and there that something evil would befall her."

Inconsolable

Bernice's mother, Aling Lita, was inconsolable.

Bernice recalled her mother's words to her: "When your sisters left, they said I should not cry and worry because what they were doing was for the country. But now that they are gone, *nasaan na yung bayan* (where is the country)? *Bakit ako lang ang umiiyak* (Why am I the only one crying)?"

"I could not answer her, and we both wept," said Bernice, Aling Lita's eldest and only surviving child.

As a way of honoring Phil and Mimi, Aling Lita still celebrates their birthdays.

"When it's the birthday of one of my sisters, *nakatunganga ang nanay ko* (my mother sits there staring at nothing) because Phil or Mimi is not around," Bernice said.

But they prepare special food, such as *pancit*, spaghetti, ice cream and cake, which they distribute to their neighbors.

"We also sing 'Happy Birthday,'" Bernice said.

Despite having been told that the OPML had claimed the lives of Phil and Mimi, Aling Lita has nursed for more than a decade the hope that her daughters are still alive.

"Every Christmas, my mother would wish that Mimi and Phil could be with us," Bernice said.

As was her practice when Phil and Mimi were still with the underground movement, Aling Lita would leave the front door of the house unlocked at night, in the hope that they would be home for Christmas. ***Tomorrow: Victims' accounts***

Anti-infiltration campaigns of the CPP

- 1982: Cadena de Amor in the Quezon-Bicol zone. It claimed the lives of 32 people.
- 1985: Takip Silim. Confined to a district in Southern Quezon, the witch-hunt led to the deaths of some 30 people.
- 1985-86: Kamapanyang Ahos in Mindanao. In Cebuano, *ahos* is garlic, which in Philippine folklore is a potent weapon in warding off *demonyo* (demons), CPP parlance for the military. The Ahos campaign resulted in the deaths of from 400 to 1,100 people.
- 1988: Operation Missing Link (OPML) in Southern Tagalog. OPML killed 66 people, mostly cadres.
- 1988-1989: Olympia in Metro Manila and Rizal. Other purges were conducted in Northern Luzon and in Eastern Visayas during this period.

'Jueteng'-free country? Just a Christmas wish

From page A1

Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. made the bold pronouncement on Dec. 22. Yesterday, when his self-imposed deadline expired, he was conspicuously silent.

A check with Director Avelino Razon, PNP director for operations, showed that the intensified anti-gambling operations which began on Dec. 15 failed to make the huge strides guaranteed by Ebdane.

As of yesterday, he said, only "88 percent" of all provinces and municipalities had been declared "jueteng-free" by police regional directors, in consultation with local religious leaders.

"[The success rate] is still basically the same," Razon said in a telephone interview.

Of course, even the 88-percent claim is anything but believable.

Still alive and well

A Batangas resident told the INQUIRER that jueteng was alive and well in his province, one of the strongholds of the illegal numbers game.

He said the last "raffle" for the year was conducted on Christmas Eve, and that operations were set to resume soon. Ebdane was very likely being taken for a ride by his subordinates, he said.

But Ebdane himself admitted in a press conference on Monday that "parts of Batangas" were among 11 areas that had yet to be declared "jueteng-free."

The other areas he identified were Pangasinan, Angeles and San Fernando cities in Pampanga, Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, Camarines Sur, Zamboanga del Sur, Sulu, and Maguindanao.

If it's any consolation, the number of arrested small-time jueteng operators increased from 1,105 to 1,970, while confiscated cash bets nearly doubled from P384,757 to P655,000 as of Wednesday. Razon said the PNP filed formal charges against 317 of those arrested.

Text messages

Probably expecting snickers for its failure, the PNP sent out text messages to media contacts yesterday, saying the campaign against illegal gambling was "continuing."

The message read: "The chief PNP is satisfied with the report of our regional directors who rendered 100-percent compliance ... [with his] order. We are not [letting down] our guard because of reports of possible guerilla jueteng resurgence in some areas."

A senior police official involved in several sensitive PNP operations earlier expressed doubts that the intensified drive against all forms of illegal gambling would go anywhere, especially with the coming elections.

"This is all [for] show," he said. "Everybody—policemen and politicians alike—gets a share from jueteng operations."

Dagupan City

On the bright side, the crusade seems to be bearing enough fruit in Dagupan City to make Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz hopeful.

Yesterday, Cruz, former president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, urged Ebdane: "Stop jueteng forever."

The archbishop, who is also national chair of the Krusada ng Bayan Laban sa Jueteng (People's Crusade Against Jueteng), said he "agreed and disagreed" with Ebdane when the latter told him it was "easy" to stop jueteng, and the real challenge was staying jueteng-free.

"If [Ebdane] maintains his position [against jueteng], jueteng will not come back anymore," Cruz said.

The apparent end of jueteng in many parts of the country in just over a week proved what the Krusada was saying all along, Cruz stressed: that jueteng was the "easiest" illegal activity to stop, "if government and police officials will resist it."

Governors and mayors awarded for anti-jueteng efforts during the recent Parangal Para sa Marangal explained exactly how easy it is, Cruz said. "They just said no."

One little word. Imagine that. ***With Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau***

'It would be like winning the lottery'

From page A1

"Owel even tapped Lita's back in Dolores," Mel said.

Then there's Owel's childhood friend, Junior, who said he saw her son in the Bicol region in May 2002.

"If you want to see him, go to Iriga," Mel quoted Junior as telling her.

But she could not go to Iriga for financial reasons.

"If I can raise the money, I will go there with my elder sister and cousin," she said.

She would need about P5,000 for the trip. "We can stay at a friend's house in the city. Owel is said to be living on the mountain," she said.

Fortune-teller

Mel's third reason for believing that Owel is alive is the word of a fortune-teller, who told her so in 1998.

She has visited fortune-tellers on several occasions, each time with a picture of Owel. As a result, only one picture of him—taken when he was about 4 years old—is all that is left of his photographs at her home.

Asked why she was consulting fortune-tellers about Owel, Mel said simply: "I want to know. He is the only one missing among my children."

An incident in Banay-banay, Cabuyao, Laguna, also strengthens Mel's hopes that her son is alive.

A New People's Army guerrilla returned home after 20 years, the mother said, adding: "And Owel hasn't showed up for only 16 years."

Intelligent

Mel describes Owel, who was born on June 3, 1963, as intelligent. "He could debate with his elders," she said.

One of the things that she remembers him by is a 30-volume Encyclopedia Americana she bought on installment in 1983 upon his request: "He said even my grandchildren could use the books. He really loves books."

The volumes are kept in a glass-covered bookcase mounted on a wall above the TV set in Mel's living room. Hardly anyone is using them, she said.

What if she learns that Owel's comrades had killed him?

"What can I do?" Mel said. "But I won't accept that my son is dead because nobody has told me that he is gone."

Owel is Gary, the husband of Bernice Galang.

Pope asks God: Save world from wars

From page A1

for the celebration in the packed basilica.

"You come to bring us peace. You are our peace," the Pope said in his homily recalling the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

"May the radiance of your birth light up the night of world. May the power of your message of love thwart the proud snare of the evil one. May the gift of your life make us understand ever more clearly the worth of the life of each human being."

The Pope opposed the war in Iraq and has expressed deep frustration in the past year over endless violence in the Holy Land and sorrow over acts of terrorism around the world.

During the ceremony, a prayer read by a woman in Arabic urged Christians, Jews and Muslims to put aside "sentiments and acts of hate, vendetta and oppression."

As the voices of the Sistine Chapel choir filled the basilica with singing, the Pope, resplendent in gold and white vestments, was wheeled up the center aisle to applause.

The Pope, who has leg and hip ailments that limit his ability to walk or stand, celebrated the Mass sitting on a special chair that rises to allow him to reach the altar without standing.

Terror alert

At a time when many people were flying across the globe to be with loved ones, Air France canceled Christmas flights to Los Angeles due to a terror alert as Washington warned Americans there was a high risk militants might attack the United States.

A US official said Washington had passed on "credible, reliable (intelligence) reports" to France that suggested militants were planning "near-term simultaneous attacks that would rival" the Sept. 11, 2001 raids on the United States.

Air France canceled the flights after US intelligence found the name of at least one person suspected of having links to terror groups on passenger manifests.

Earlier this week, US President George W. Bush's administration raised its terror alert to the second-highest level, saying it was necessary to guard against "al-Qaida's continued desire to carry out attacks against our homeland."

US officials have warned Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida might try to use aircraft in a repeat of the 2001 attacks against New York and Washington that killed nearly 3,000 people.

In Iraq, about half a dozen rockets slammed into central Baghdad on Thursday in guerrilla attacks on several targets in the city. *(Story in The World, Page A6.)*

Bethlehem

At the West Bank, prayers for Middle East peace rose to the rafters in Bethlehem on Thursday, but found little echo of hope in Jesus's birthplace as it spent another somber Christmas encircled by the Israeli army.

Pope John Paul's representative in the Holy Land said in a Christmas sermon Israel's building of a huge barrier through the West Bank was a blow to Middle East peace efforts.

Christian Palestinians and foreign pilgrims made their way through Israeli army roadblocks to pack the ancient Church of the Nativity for the Christmas midnight Mass.

But the crowd was a far cry from the many thousands of pilgrims who poured into Bethlehem for Christmas before Palestinians launched an uprising in 2000 for statehood.

For the Christmas morning service, only a couple of hundred worshippers—mostly Palestinians—gathered at the church. Outside, street sweepers cleaned cigarette butts, coffee cups and chewed corn cobs from the rose-hued stones.

"The military barrier is turning Palestinian cities and villages into a huge prison, demolishing houses and agriculture (in its path)," Patriarch Michel Sabbah, who celebrated the midnight Mass, said in his sermon.

Outside the church, banners hanging from façades in Manger Square condemned the barrier, which Israel says is necessary to stop suicide bombers attacking the Jewish state. Palestinians say the barrier robs them of land they want for a state.

"Stop the wall, don't turn Bethlehem into a ghetto" and "The Holy Land doesn't need walls, but bridges," read the banners.

Arafat barred

For the third straight year, Israel banned Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from attending the internationally televised mass in the Byzantine-era Nativity church.

His usual seat in the front pew was left empty, draped with a keffiyeh headdress that he wears and bearing his name-plate.

Arafat, a Muslim like most Palestinians, told reporters at his shell-battered Ramallah headquarters on Thursday that Israel had "tried to harm the morale of the Palestinian people" by barring him. *Reuters*

Politicians hamper relief distribution work

From page A1

to the town's vice mayor, Bonifacio Amarga Jr.

"We were hit in the crossfire," said the social welfare official.

In Liloan and Barangay Pinut-an in San Ricardo, no problem arose in the distribution of relief goods.

The United States and Japan were among the first countries that responded to the call for assistance from the affected families.

Representative Saludo was in Manila when the tragedy struck, but he said in an interview over radio station dyDM on Thursday morning that he was not able to come home immediately because "I was facilitating the goods coming from other countries because they don't know the local officials here."

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman told Radyo ng Bayan that all donations from other countries were coursed through her office.

Marissa Saludo arrived in San Francisco on Sunday afternoon, claiming that she arrived there first before Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias, who already dropped in relief goods in the morning before going to Pinut-an.

Stickers

At the San Francisco Parish convent where relief and evacuation centers were set up, packs of relief goods bore stickers that read: "Malipayong Pasko through the effort of Rep. Aniceto Saludo."

Vice Gov. Eva Tomol, who supervised the operation center at the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Center at the capitol, said she had instructed the parish priest, Edmund Resus, to secure the relief goods, especially those coming from foreign countries.

"I have requested Father Resus to secure the goods coming from other countries and outside Southern Leyte to prevent it from [being posted] with Saludo stickers. It would be very shameful," Tomol said. "*Di bale na ang gikan sa* province (Never mind those that came from the province)."

On Tuesday, while President Macapagal-Arroyo was talking with relatives of the victims inside the convent, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Political Affairs Secretary Gabriel Claudio were overheard talking about the stickers.

"*Talaga si Congressman Saludo, magandang lalake pa rin* (Congressman Saludo is still good-looking)," Ermita said when asked to comment about the stickers.

Christmas party

Saludo also hosted a Christmas party yesterday noon at the covered court with the evacuees, said Vice Mayor Amarga. The lawmaker also initiated the showing of cartoon movies at the gymnasium for the children, he said.

Amarga, a lay minister and ally of Governor Lerias, confirmed the problems in the distribution of the relief goods.

He said he had insisted that all goods given by nongovernment organizations be coursed through the Church. Those coming from hospitals should be channeled through the Rural Health Unit, he added.

Amarga said he made the suggestion following an incident in which some relief goods were withdrawn and given to the municipal hall.

The vice mayor clarified that the Church had nothing to do with the distribution of goods sourced from government agencies. He explained that some people might have misunderstood it because the DSWD distributed the goods at the parish convent.

On Wednesday, the evacuees celebrated an emotional Christmas Eve.

Father Resus said the victims had not lost their faith in God despite the tragedy. Many of them attended Mass at the town's church.

"Notwithstanding the tragedy that befell us, it's no reason for us not to celebrate Christmas ... it was this time that our Savior Jesus was born and later sacrificed His own life," Resus said during the homily.

Surigao del Sur

In Surigao del Sur, seven more persons were confirmed dead, bringing to 12 the number of people who drowned in swollen rivers.

Florencio Pimentel Jr., PDCC chief, said the victims came from the towns of Tago, Carrascal, Lianga and San Miguel.

Three of the latest victims were earlier reported missing after they were swept away by rampaging waters in the rivers. Their bodies were found floating in a river in Lianga town.

Pimentel said the floods, considered the worst to hit the province since the 1960s, damaged more than P70 million worth of infrastructure, livestock and crops. *With reports from Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau; Volt Contreras in Manila, and Bert Pacate, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

SURVIVORS of the landslides in San Francisco, Southern Leyte, line up for relief goods at the evacuation center. AFP

Rescuers find 7 more boat survivors

From page A1

Dagupan City, together with the Malaysian Navy ship KD SRI Melaka, are pressing ahead with the search and rescue operations.

A Panamanian-registered tanker, the MV Pacific Valor, plucked from rough seas 20 of the passengers and crew members of the ML Pia-ry near Fearless Shoal, which lies between Balabac Island at the southern tip of Palawan and Malaysia's Banguey Island off the northern tip of Borneo.

In Japan, two Filipino crew members were reported missing after an explosion on a chemical tanker off southwestern Japan on Wednesday, the Japanese Coast Guard said.

A tank carrying ethanol exploded while the ship was traveling in waters around 12 km southwest of Iwaijima in Yamaguchi prefecture, causing a fire to break out.

All of the tanker's 19 crew members were from the Philippines, according to the Japanese Coast Guard.

A number of Coast Guard helicopters and at least five patrol boats had been sent to the scene. A rescue team was also on its way from Yokohama near Tokyo.

Seventeen crew members were still on board the 4,356-ton Panamanian-registered tanker, the Sun Venus, which was carrying 4,000 tons of ethanol and heading to Kobe in western Japan from South Korea.

"The crew members are continuing their efforts to put out the fire," a Japanese Coast Guard official said.

Footage shown by public broadcaster NHK showed damage to the front part of the ship, with water being sprayed toward a hole in the deck.

Flames were not clearly visible, however, and NHK said the tanker was headed toward a port in Yamaguchi prefecture under its own power. *Reports from Leila B. Salaverria, TJ Burgonio and Reuters*

Impeach signatory backs Erap trip to US

From page A1

abayan (Bayan) in Panay, said the court order reflected the "patent opportunism" of the Macapagal administration.

He said the Sandiganbayan had become a tool of the administration to "help salvage" President Macapagal-Arroyo's "dismal" electoral chances in the May presidential election.

Trenas said the Macapagal administration should be reminded that "its existence was a consequence of a greater power—People Power."

Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Lakas, Surigao del Sur) dismissed speculations that Malacañang was out to woo voters from Estrada constituents as a result of the Sandiganbayan.

Pichay, a member of Ms Macapagal's campaign staff, noted that the incumbent President was assured of 30 percent of the votes to be cast next year.

"A sitting president has a built-in advantage of 30 percent (of the votes) because of his or her machinery in place," he said.

Kilayko acknowledged that the timing of the Sandiganbayan ruling may be suspect, considering Ms Macapagal's plan to run for reelection next year.

But Kilayko said "the President has been sympathetic to Estrada since before," owing to the fact that she had worked with Estrada as senator and later as vice president.

"The President has charity in her heart (toward Estrada)," she said.

Iloilo Rep. Arthur Defensor, a lawyer and Lakas provincial chair, said the prosecution should appeal the decision.

"We cannot agree with the Sandiganbayan. I think it has been clearly established by medical experts that the health problems of Mr. Estrada can well be attended to and addressed in this country. And, that we have not only the expertise but we also have the facilities," Defensor said.

Pressed for time

The chief prosecutor in the graft and plunder cases against Estrada yesterday said that time may not be on the prosecutors' side as they seek to stop Estrada from leaving the country because the Sandiganbayan resolution was issued during the Christmas break.

"If warranted, we will go through (with the filing of a temporary restraining order before the Supreme Court), but we are too much pressed for time," Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said in a telephone interview.

He said his team would have to ask the special division of the Sandiganbayan on Monday to "suspend" the implementation of its resolution "to give us time."

The Sandiganbayan has given Estrada 10 days within which to prepare for his trip to the United States.

Villa-Ignacio said that while the Supreme Court and the Sandiganbayan offices were closed during the Christmas break, the clock was ticking in favor of Estrada.

"By the time we file the motion for reconsideration [before the Sandiganbayan], it will be moot and academic," he said.

It was likely that Estrada would have left by then, according to Villa-Ignacio.

For Villa-Ignacio, the certainty of Estrada taking flight is very strong. In the first place, there is nothing that the government can do to make Estrada come back, he said. "The US is not obligated to return him here."

The extradition treaty does not bind the United States to send back to the country suspected criminals facing the death penalty.

Return

Estrada said that on the night the Sandiganbayan issued its ruling that he was determined to return to the country.

"I will not run away," he said. Estrada reiterated that the Macapagal administration had twice offered him to go abroad shortly after he lost power, but he said he did not accept the offer.

"I am really not inclined to go if not for my deteriorating health condition," he said in Filipino on Tuesday.

He said the Sandiganbayan decision did not constitute a double standard for clemency.

"I cannot be equated with other people in jail because I've been once a mayor, a senator, a vice president and President of this country," he said.

One of Estrada's court-appointed lawyers yesterday said he would ask the Sandiganbayan to clarify some of the conditions it set for the former President's travel.

In an interview with Sandiganbayan reporters, Jose Flaminiano said that for one, the defense lawyers were objecting to the court's order for Estrada to foot the bill for the four policemen who will escort him abroad.

Because Estrada is under the jurisdiction of the court and the Philippine government, then it is the government's responsibility to shoulder the expense of guarding Estrada, according to Flaminiano.

He said the defense lawyers also wanted Estrada to choose the policemen who will accompany him to the United States, not the head of the Philippine National Police.

US visa

Flaminiano also said that the 10 days that the court gave Estrada for him to prepare for his trip may be too short because he and those going with him would still have to get their visas.

Malacañang yesterday expressed confidence that Estrada would finally get a US visa. The US Embassy rejected Estrada's application for a US visa early this year.

At a briefing, the President's spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the Sandiganbayan decision would justify this time Estrada's application for a visa. "Now there is this supervening event for the grant of a visa," he said.

Bunye said Malacañang would not intervene in the visa application because this was the sole prerogative of the US government.

"His lawyers would have to go through the process and cite the Sandiganbayan decision as a basis. Let us await the decision of the US Embassy," he said. *With reports from Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Raj Padilla, PDI Visayas Bureau; and Carlito Pablo and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. in Manila*

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

RULES AND REGULATIONS ON THE MANDATORY DRUG TEST OF CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE, BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL, UNDER SECTION 36 (G) OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9125 IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAY 10, 2004 SYNCHRONIZED NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS.
x-------------------------x

ABALOS, Benjamin S.,	Chairman
TANCANGCO, Luzviminda G.,	Commissioner
JAVIER, Rufino S.B.,	Commissioner
LANTION, Ralph C.,	Commissioner
SADAIN, Mehol K.,	Commissioner
BORRA, Resurreccion Z.,	Commissioner
TUASON, Jr., Florentino A.,	Commissioner

Promulgated on 23 December 2003

RESOLUTION NO. 6486

WHEREAS, Section 36 (g) of Republic Act No. 9165 provides:

"SEC. 36. Authorized Drug Testing. - Authorized drug testing shall be done by any government forensic laboratories or by any of the drug testing laboratories accredited and monitored by the DOH to safeguard the quality of the test results. The DOH shall take steps in setting the price of the drug test with DOH-accredited drug testing centers to further reduce the cost of such drug tests. The drug testing shall employ, among others, two (2)-testing methods, the screening test which will determine the positive results as well as the type of drug used and the confirmatory test which will confirm a positive screening test. Drug test certificates issued by accredited drug testing centers shall be valid for a one-year period from the date of issue, which may be used, for other purposes. The following shall be subjected to undergo drug testing:

xxx xxx xxx

(g) "All candidates for public office whether appointed or elected both in the national or local government shall undergo mandatory drug test."

WHEREAS, Section 1, Article XI of the 1987 Constitution provides "that public officers and employees must at all times be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency;

WHEREAS, by requiring candidates to undergo mandatory drug test, the public will know the quality of candidates they are electing and they will be assured that only those who can serve with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency will be elected to hold public office."

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commission on Elections, pursuant to the authority vested in it under the Constitution, Batas Pambansa Blg. 881 (Omnibus Election Code), Republic Act No. 9165 and other election laws, RESOLVED to promulgate, as it hereby promulgates, the following rules and regulations on the conduct of mandatory drug testing to candidates for public office.

SECTION 1. Coverage. - All candidates for public office, both national and local, in the May 10, 2004 Synchronized National and Local Elections shall undergo mandatory drug test in government forensic laboratories or any drug testing laboratories monitored and accredited by the Department of Health.

SEC. 2. Where to File. - The drug test certificate shall be submitted with the following offices of the Commission:

(a) candidates for national positions - with the Law Department;

(b) nominees of party/sectoral organization participating in the party list system - with the Law Department;

(c) candidates for member of the House of Representatives in the National Capital Region - with the Regional Election Director;

(d) candidates for provincial positions - with the office of the Provincial Election Supervisor concerned; and

(e) candidates for municipal positions - with the office of the Election Officer concerned.

SEC. 3. When to file. - The Drug test certificate shall be filed as follows:

(a) candidates for national positions - not later than February 8, 2004; and

(b) candidates for local positions, including nominees of party/sectoral organization participating in the party list system - not later than March 24, 2004.

On March 25, 2004, in addition to the drug certificates filed with their respective offices, the Comelec Offices and employees concerned shall submit to the Law Department two (2) separate lists of candidates. The first list shall consist of those candidates who complied with the mandatory drug test while the second list shall consist of those candidates who failed to comply with the said drug test.

SEC. 4. - Preparation and publication of names of candidates. - Before the start of the campaign period, the Commission shall prepare two separate lists of candidates. The first list shall consist of those candidates who complied with the mandatory drug test while the second list shall consist of those candidates who failed to comply with said drug test. Thereafter, said lists shall be published in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

SEC. 5. - Effect of failure to undergo mandatory drug test and file drug test certificate. - No person elected to any public office shall enter upon the duties of his office until he has undergone mandatory drug test and filed with the offices enumerated under Section 2 hereof the drug test certificate herein required.

SEC. 6. - Effectivity. This resolution shall take effect on the seventh day after its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

SEC. 7. Dissemination. - The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of this resolution in two (2) newspapers of general circulation, and furnish copies thereof to all field offices of the Commission, registered political parties, sectoral groups, organizations, and/or coalitions thereof participating in the party-list system.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

LUZVIMINDA G. TANCANGCO
Commissioner

RUFINO S.B. JAVIER
Commissioner

RALPH C. LANTION
Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

I dissent on sec. 5 of this resolution. The provision of Sec. 36 (g) of the law & Art. II, Sec. 36(g) of the IRR should be applied in the absence of [illegible] provision on the [illegible] of [illegible] of Sec. 36(g).

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

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Day of peace

EDITORIAL

DEPENDING on your preference, Dec. 26 provides either the respite from the frenzy and fatigue of Christmas or the launching pad to the frenzy and fatigue of the New Year. Either way, the day seems part of the long celebration of the Yuletide. Whether one treats Dec. 26 as hangover day or any regular shop-till-you-drop day, it is really more of the same. It is just part of the celebration.

But there's another way to look at Dec. 26. It is a day to restore the lost meaning of the day before. It is the day afforded by the calendar to retrieve what has been lost from the flurry of Christmas: the true meaning of Christmas. It is the day of recovering the essence of Christmas. It is a day of reckoning.

And so perhaps today is the best day to reaffirm our commitment to peace. It cannot be otherwise since dire events have a way of insinuating themselves into the holiday mood. Look at the floods and landslides in Leyte, Samar and Surigao. Look at the shipwreck off Palawan. Don't these tragedies show that all is not exactly well despite the optimism of Christmas? Don't these calamities prefigure of things coming unhinged despite our best efforts to cheer up this Christmas?

In this case, there must be a renewed push for peace in all of the conflict fronts. This is needed because the revelry tends to disguise the crisis plaguing the nation. It is the crisis of war, a most "un-Christmassy" prospect.

To be sure, the crisis seems negligible because of the periodic cessation of hostilities that the combatants on either side seem to have made it their expertise every Christmas. For this season, in fact, the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF) have agreed on a truce. To their credit, the ceasefire is holding. But to their non-credit, there's no distinct signal on either side that they would go back to the negotiating table. In short, the ceasefire seems to be all for show. Like Christmas that has fallen into the infectious turmoil of consumerism, peace, as interpreted by the NDF and the government, is just an artifice, a convenient rhetoric.

On the other conflict front, there's the Muslim secessionist problem. Of course, it is stupid to think that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front would go for peace in the spirit of Christmas. But the Philippine government could at least make a case for peace with them, peace being a universal goal regardless of religion.

But does the MILF have a stake for peace? Let it show its true colors. It is agonizing for every peace-loving Filipino, Christian or Muslim, to witness how the government struggles with prudential language in order to explain the MILF's alleged connections, peripheral or direct, with international terrorism, while the MILF itself keeps mum about it, or worse, shows up in every sordid terrorist situation together with the Abu Sayyaf, al-Qaida or the Jemaah Islamiyaah.

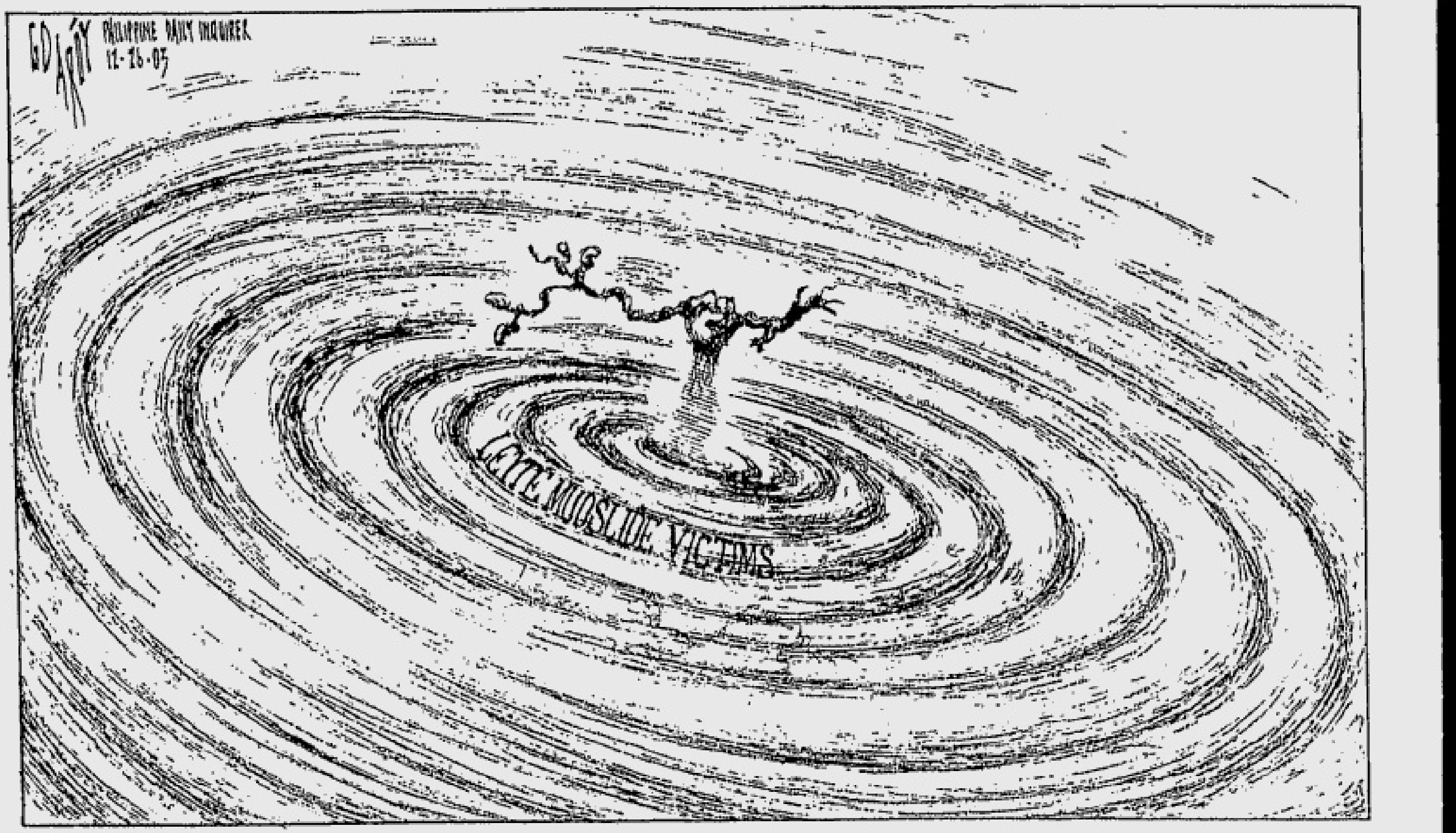
In the not-so-distant past, the MILF had pledged to arrest or disable Abu Sayyaf or Arab terrorists in the territories it purportedly controlled, but to no avail. Let it show its commitment to peace. The crafty tongue dooms itself.

But the government must make a real push for peace. Alas, this seems threatened by the contagious politicking for the forthcoming elections, in which politicians would be expected to exalt peace to high heavens without exactly lifting a finger to remotely connect their bombast to reality. Thus, sloganeering and pandering threaten to make peace both a pipe dream and a casualty in the election.

Therefore, thank God for Dec. 26. The day reminds us that for all our high-sounding pronouncements of living up to the Christmas spirit, we are far from the idealism of our pretensions. Dec. 26 is not a Christmas Day hangover. It wakes us from our stupor. It rouses us up from too much sousing on the wine and spirits of our own illusions.

Come to think of it, Dec. 26 is the feast day of St. Stephen. It is a credit to the magnificent conception of the Church that it assigned the day after Christmas as the feast day of the first Christian martyr. There is no irony here. The Church is saying that the birth of the Savior should be reflected in the lives of His followers through the example of the first Christian martyr. Life and death—and peace—are all connected.

So peace is not just part of the Christmas celebration. It is the essence of the celebration. Woe to us who profess to celebrate Christmas in mere appearance and artifice. Woe to us who profess to toast the King of Peace but do not do so in word and deed.



Don't be an irresponsible pet owner

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

SOME TIME before Christmas, a neighbor turned over to us a black puppy he said he had found lost in a street near our home. We accepted the puppy, which looked a little thin than normal, with the intention of looking for its owner later and returning it. "A little child may be crying over its loss," I said.

We fed it and my daughter took it to the veterinarian for vaccinations and a checkup. Apart from being underweight and having some skin disease, there was nothing seriously wrong with it.

My daughter asked for its owner on the street where it was found, but nobody acknowledged ownership. She asked the neighbor who found it exactly where he saw it. He said it was near a canal—inside a plastic bag! That meant the puppy was purposely thrown away to die, probably by a maid on orders of her employer.

Our village is supposedly an upper middle-class subdivision, with educated residents, almost all professionals, living in expensive homes on big lots. Could one of them have purposely thrown away a puppy to die a slow painful death? It was in a plastic bag in which it would have slowly suffocated had it not been found in time by our neighbor.

In recent years and months, we have been finding puppies and kittens left on the street, sidewalks and vacant lots near our home. One day, my daughter found a black-and-white puppy with mange on a neighbor's driveway. She thought it belonged to the neighbor, but when she asked, they said it wasn't theirs. She took it to the vet who gave it a medical bath and some shots. Now the puppy is a happy, frisky, healthy adult dog with a thick, shiny growth of fur. Not a trace of the mange that probably scared its former owner to abandon it near our home.

Another time, while my daughter was in the front yard, two maids passed by, one of them carrying a brown paper bag. A little past our house, this maid put the bag down and then walked away. The bag began to move, and out crawled a black-and-white puppy.

My daughter called the maid and asked her why she left the puppy there. She replied that her employer ordered her to throw the puppy away. "*Mayron kasing galis,*" she said. It indeed had mange.

My daughter told her she could not just abandon the puppy there and to take it to a veterinarian. The maid went back and took the puppy. Then my daughter had second thoughts. Knowing that the maid would probably leave the puppy in some vacant lot where it could not be seen and eventually die, she called her back and told her to leave the puppy; she would take care of it.

She took it to the vet, and now that puppy is a healthy grown up dog with shiny fur, its mange cured.

One evening, my daughter heard kittens meowing. She looked for them and came back with six brown-and-white kittens in her arms. We adopted them and now they're growing up. The smallest of them is totally blind but it is coping well with its disability. Because of it, my two daughters dote on it.

On different occasions, my daughters found kittens abandoned in vacant lots near our home. Usually, it starts with them hearing kittens meowing somewhere. Even late at night, they would take flashlights and look for them, following the sounds of their cries.

Question: Are there people in our upscale village who leave unwanted kittens and puppies near our home, knowing that we would adopt them? How irresponsible can they get? There are proper animal shelters and city pounds where they can surrender their unwanted pets. We are not an animal shelter. And sick pets or those with skin diseases can easily be treated by veterinarians. Why do they dump their responsibilities on their neighbors?

We now have 50 cats and 10 dogs in our home, all but one of them abandoned by their former owners. All of them are spayed or neutered, so they don't multiply. Each new addition is an abandoned kitten or puppy found in the streets.

"They would be run over by vehicles or die of disease if we don't save them," say my daughters. All of them have names and receive veterinary care.

All my three children have always been animal lovers. When my son was in elementary school, he took home a kitten he had found in a ditch. It had been mauled by dogs; it had many bite wounds and was near death. Nevertheless, my young son treated its wounds and kept it in a box in his room, getting up at night to comfort it whenever it cried. Despite his efforts, however, the kitten died after several days and he buried it in the backyard.

When my daughter saw a boy with a bird he had caught in a trap, she persuaded him to sell it to her. Then she let it fly away.

Of the 10 dogs that we have, only one, a black Labrador Retriever, was originally wanted by us. I asked for it from the litter of a friend to replace a black Lab that my daughter had bought as a puppy but which died of skin cancer as an adult. The eight others were no longer wanted by their former owners who asked us to adopt them. The 10th is the throw-away puppy I described at the beginning. One is a black mini-Pinscher, and another is a brown-and-white Basset Hound.

The seven others are all mongrels, *askals* until we provided a home for them. Their former owners must have wanted them in the beginning. Why else did they get them? But when they got sick, they discarded them like garbage.

If you are planning to have a pet, remember that it is a big responsibility. If you can't give your pet proper care and attention, it is best that you don't acquire one.

Fighting pirates

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

OVER the last few days, I've read several articles again about the complaints of the entertainment industry about piracy. It's Metro Manila Film Festival season again, and so these concerns are bound to be raised. To fight piracy, the Movie Producers Organization has produced a spot that will be aired on TV and movie theaters laying a guilt trip on the public, apart from putting the fear of Bong Revilla on them, for buying pirated products. It has also arranged projects with school associations to bring up the problem of piracy to the attention of grade-school pupils through assignments.

These measures will be about as effective as treating emphysema with Vitamin C.

In fact there is a way to stop the illegal reproduction of local movies, which I've been advocating for years now and which I thought would be law by now, after having spoken to some lawmakers. That is a law that bans the pirating of local products and sets penalties for it, including stiff fines and jail terms. There is no other way to do it.

First off, that is the only mandate the Videogram Regulatory Board can have. As I keep saying, the VRB is a government office. It's taxpayers' money, the part of our hard earned pay taken away from us come March or April, that pays for its upkeep, and that Bong Revilla is using to campaign ahead of sked through huge billboards proclaiming him to be the scourge of pirates. Each time I see that gigantic one along Edsa, I am tempted to climb the thing and add to the sign that says, "*Labanan ang pirata,*" (fight pirates) the words, "*tutulan ang pag-aksaya ng pera ng bayan sa gantong paraan*" (protest taxpayers' money being wasted this way). That is really fighting piracy.

The VRB being a government office, its duty is to serve Filipino citizens and not American, European and Asian producers. I can understand why it should want to protect Viva and Regal and Seiko, I cannot understand why it would want to protect Paramount and Universal and Sony. Why should I agree to having the money I made by the sweat of my brow used to pay cops to scuttle my friendly neighborhood Muslim's stand in Quiapo just so George Lucas won't lose money in these parts? That isn't just idiotic, it is iniquitous. No taxation without representation? No being fried in your own fat!

Second off, that is the only viable justification for it, defense of national interest, not defense of intellectual property rights. I will not go into the moral double standard that underlies the intellectual property rights championed by GATT. Suffice it to say that you turn anti-piracy into a moral crusade, you'll throw this country farther back into the Dark Ages than it already is. That is so because you will not only have to defend movie producers from pirates, you will have to defend software producers, notably Microsoft, from them too. Why should there be any difference from the standpoint of intellectual property rights between "Lord of the Rings" and Windows XP?

Until the VRB can show proof that all the computers in its office use only licensed Microsoft products—indeed until Revilla can show proof the software used to produce the graphics in his campaign materials (that is what those billboards are) was not bought from Virra Mall—I will continue to rail at his idea of fighting piracy. More than that, unless all those individuals and groups who have been loudly arraigning pirates can show proof their manifestos were typed out in licensed Microsoft Office software, notably Word, I will deem their cause hypocritical.

You defend software ferociously as well, chief of it Microsoft Windows, the booting system of most PCs in this country, and you might as well smash our fragile economy with a sledgehammer. Among its effects will be to jack up the cost of education, if not indeed spread ignorance, students now being forced to buy software they get for less than a hundred pesos at several hundred dollars.

And third off, that is the only doable anti-piracy policy there is. You cannot stop piracy altogether for the simple reason that the technology is there, which not quite incidentally suggests that the "intellectual property" in digital form is unreasonably priced. The technology isn't just there, it is leaping and bounding all over the place. Mitsubishi has now introduced a DVD writer that runs at 16x, which can copy a DVD in four minutes or so. Another company has introduced blue laser, whose writing capabilities enable an ordinary blank DVD to store up to 27 gig of data (from the current 4.7 gig, single layer). How do you stop something like that? Might as well bid the waves hold still.

But though you cannot stop piracy altogether, you can stop certain forms of it by appealing to nationalist sentiment. I don't know why your friendly neighborhood "*Bili na kayo, ginyuwayn*" Muslim vendor cannot be persuaded to sell only non-local stuff. Certainly, I don't know why your unfriendly neighborhood Christian consumer cannot be persuaded to buy only non-local stuff. I do know a lot of people are doing it already, on their own volition, drawing the line at local products. That can be made the norm, the opprobrium attaching to those who sell—and buy—local movies and music CDs being more natural and spontaneous. That is what other Asian countries are doing. You want to watch local movies, go to a movie theater. You want to listen to local artists, buy their original albums, though here I must add the caveat again that the CDs have to reflect the real cost of producing them in a competitive environment and not the manufactured one but that is another story.

But you want to protect the local movie industry, yes, it can be done. This way.

Saddam's capture reshapes US presidential debate

NEWS ANALYSIS

Tom Raum

Democratic candidates are scrambling to adjust to the changing landscape

WASHINGTON— President George W. Bush keeps revising his rationale for invading Iraq to fit changing circumstances. Now with Saddam Hussein in captivity, the Democrats seeking to win the White House next year are the ones working the hardest to re-frame the foreign-policy debate.

Many of those hopefuls, finding their attacks on Bush's Iraq policy blunted by Saddam's capture, are shifting focus to other elements of the president's approach to world affairs. They accuse him of antagonizing European allies and of not doing enough to protect the country or track down Osama bin Laden.

Howard Dean's rivals seized the opportunity to gang up on the Democratic front-runner, attacking the former Vermont governor for his strident opposition to the war and for saying that Saddam's capture "has not made America safer."

Suddenly, the October 2002 vote in Congress authorizing the war did not seem to be the liability it had been for candidates who had voted for it: Senators John Kerry of Massachusetts, John Edwards of North Carolina and Joe Lieberman of Connecticut and Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri.

The president and his advisers were re-calibrating their rhetoric to take into account Saddam's capture, while trying hard not to gloat.

"The White House can string out this Saddam thing for quite some time. It is not an overnight story," said Alan Lichtman, a presidential historian at American University. "The Saddam capture helps seal the favorable conditions for Bush by giving him some insulation from criticism on Iraq—not forever but at least for a time—to try to stabilize the situation there."

In fact, attacks against US troops in Iraq continued last week despite the arrest of the toppled Iraqi leader. Bush's surge in public opinion polls could fade if the attacks increase and more Americans die.

For now, Bush is sitting high, also buoyed by recent improvements in the economy.

Even as Democrats pressed their case that Bush antagonized European allies, special envoy James A. Baker III was winning important pledges from war opponents France, Germany and Russia to help reduce Iraq's massive foreign debt.

Bush's war rationale has gone through many revisions. First, he cited the need to seize Saddam's alleged weapons of mass destruction. When none was found, liberating the Iraqi people from a brutal rule became the grounds. As time dragged on and attacks intensified, Bush stressed the importance of confronting terrorists in Iraq rather than at home. He asserted links between Saddam and terrorist organizations. Then the mission became one of spreading democracy through the Middle East.

The new post-Saddam rationale is that the war helped to make the United States "a safer, more prosperous and better nation." It's a line Bush used at a news conference last week and one that is likely to become a refrain in his State of the Union address and campaign speeches.

"The fact that he is not there ... means America's a more secure country," he asserted in a follow-up interview with ABC.

Democratic candidates are scrambling to adjust to the changing landscape. Dean sought to reinforce his strong anti-war credentials with his remark that Americans are no safer with Saddam in custody. No matter that he told CBS in September 2002 that there was "no question Saddam Hussein is a threat to the United States," if not an immediate one.

Lieberman's retort—that Saddam "would still be in power today and not in prison" if Dean had his way—is sure to wind up in Bush-Cheney campaign spots and as debate fodder if Dean is the Democratic nominee, as Bush advisers believe likely.

Kerry suggested Saddam might have been caught more quickly if the United States had more allies. He proposed new measures to guard US ports against terrorist attacks, saying "the clock on homeland security is ticking."

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark, another Democratic candidate, suggested Bush should have had US troops track down Bin Laden instead of waging war in Iraq.

Ivo Daalder, a former senior official at the National Security Council during the Clinton administration and a foreign-policy adviser to Dean, said too much is being made of Saddam's capture. "Everybody knew we were going to get Saddam at some point. We had 135,000 soldiers looking for him," Daalder said.

Still, Daalder said, the capture gives Bush "a rare second chance" to end the occupation, bring in international forces and turn the government over to Iraqis.

Meanwhile, the image of Saddam "rotting in prison is a salutary example to all other dictators," Daalder said. *AP*

Technology and the holidays

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THANKS to technology, the holidays have taken on a different spin. For many, shopping no longer means trekking through the malls or *tiangges*, but simply clicking away at online shopping sites, typing in their credit card details, then waiting for their orders to arrive.

All day yesterday and the day before, my cell phone beeped incessantly, bearing tidings of joy and good wishes, holiday greetings and heartfelt felicitations, some of them with icons and pictograms that made them seem like miniature cards. A few were even animated!

Through the power of the Internet, we are even capable of sending greeting cards instantly, complete with music, animation and other effects. No longer is there need to crowd into bookstores to choose the "perfect" card, pen a message and make sure to mail it in plenty of time before the postal system gets clogged with Christmas mail. Instead, all we need to do is troll through the ready-made selections, click on designs that appeal to us, and send our e-cards to the right addresses.

One would think these developments would have taken much of the stress and effort out of the holidays. But due to some quirk of human nature, we find ourselves still struggling to lend the season a touch of tradition, a way to harken back to the way things were, when sharing goodwill and good wishes weren't so convenient or effortless. Something in us still resists the lure of the techno-fix, insisting that we invest time, work and, most important, sentiment in the celebration.

But even when mediated by technology, a meaningful message still has the power to touch and move, imbued with immediacy and significance. I guess when a message comes with heart, it manages to cross even the technological divide with sentiment intact.

Let me share with you, then, as a sort of late Christmas present, this message from my friend Jean Llorin and her family, which sums up for me what the holiday just past is all about.

* * *

LET us give thanks for the gifts of Christmas...especially those that come unwrapped—
- **The silent guns...**
- **The homecomings...**
- **The peace dialogues...**

Let us be glad for the joy of Christmas,
Especially the simplest ones—
- **Packing a gift for a child.**
- **Being with family and friends,**
- **Coming together before the altar.**

Let us sing the songs of Christmas—
Especially those we sing quietly in our hearts—
For they carry the eternal language of our soul.
Let us wish for the hope of Christmas—
Especially those most difficulty to hear—
- **the heart of the unborn,**
- **the lips of the homeless,**
- **the hands of the worker,**
- **the letter of those away from home,**
- **the tears of the lonely and abandoned.**

Let us capture the vision of Christmas—
Especially the one you see in the eyes of a child—creating in us:
- **the strength of hope,**
- **the courage to act,**
- **the heart to love,**
- **and the power to dream.**

Let us brighten up with the star of Christmas,
- **leading us to the source of light,**
- **moving us to the untraveled road to Peace.**

Let us live the spirit of Christmas,
The Spirit of God who empties Himself
and becomes a helpless child, inviting us to discover what powerlessness, poverty and humility can bring forth in human hearts.

* * *

IT'S not exactly a movie that brings out the Christmas spirit, but amid the holiday-themed movies shown on TV yesterday, what caught our attention was "The Frighteners," a horror film that we've always loved because of the witty and audacious special effects.

It's an early work of Peter Jackson, who rose from obscurity to oversee what will, as many critics agree, eventually be recognized as the greatest movie fantasy adventure of all time, the film trilogy of "Lord of the Rings."

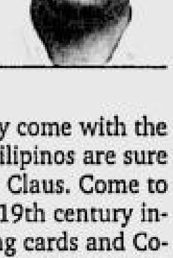
Thought it wasn't a hit and was dismissed by critics, "The Frighteners" bears many touches that would make their way to "LOTR," from the innovative mix of live action and special effects, the relentless energy of many scenes, and the way the filmmakers challenge movie conventions.

Perhaps this tells us something. Like how vision and courage cannot be measured by mundane matters like box-office receipts and critics' opinions. Or how passion can overcome personal limitations. Or how a career is built up even by failure and how promise is fulfilled through the right match of a dream and a dream project.

Not bad lessons to learn on the day after Christmas.

Unending search for answers

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

NOCHE BUENA is a high that crash-lands the next morning. Hangover, indigestion, lack of sleep, thoughtless gifts or, worse, thoughtful ones that likewise end up recycled over the next year. One reliable economic indicator for me was the number and quality of presents waiting under the Christmas tree. We would also post Christmas cards on the wall and cringe at the number of fruit cakes we had to recycle. In recent years, fruit cakes have become extinct. I didn't receive a single fruit cake this year. Christmas cards were not enough to fill our glass sliding doors.

First I blamed the economy. Then I asked the family if I needed underarm deodorant or mouthwash. There is less cheer this year. Candles, incense and home-made soaps replaced fruit cakes last year. This year there was none. The lack of Christmas cards can be blamed on e-mail and texting. Snail mail is definitely out. We weren't even advised to post letters and parcels early and beat the so-called Christmas rush. No matter how bleak the Christmas tree was this year, I still look forward to New Year's Eve and the carnival we call an election next year.

On the threshold of a new year, I hope I can find answers to some questions that have been brought up during the year like: How come there is no *lumpiang Shanghai* in Shanghai? How come there is no *pancit Canton* in Canton? No Bangkok santol in Bangkok? No Vienna sausage in Vienna? No *longanisang Macao* in Macao? No *arroz a la Cubana* in Havana? How come the tacos we know and enjoy here is not the same as those served in Mexico? How come what we know as "Spanish sardines" are not quite the same as sardines from Spain? While we are on the subject of canned sardines, have you ever noticed that one of the traditional brands from Portugal sold locally is called "Mabuti"? Perhaps the distributors give us brands that are traditional. For example, *queso de bola* is actually edam cheese from Holland, but when abroad I have never encountered the familiar trademarks—Pato and Piña (they come with the appropriate drawing)—that to Filipinos are sure indicators of Christmas as Santa Claus. Come to think of it, if Santa Claus was a 19th century invention made popular by greeting cards and Coca-Cola in the 20th century, who was the Christmas icon in the Philippines during the Spanish period?

So many questions, so little time. While we are on the subject of food, how come we have some disgusting names for certain food? The best example is the sticky sweetened coconut snack popular in Baguio. It's a small piece packaged inside a wooden container and sealed with red tape. In polite terms, it is known as *matamis na bao* but its popular (or should I say vulgar) name is *kulangot* because it does resemble snot. Sometimes racism rears its head and it is called *kulangot ng Intsik*. Why it isn't called *kulangot ng Igorot* escapes me.

Then there is the dried mushroom called *tengang daga* because it does resemble rat ears. Surely there is a more appetizing term for the same mushroom.

Then there is the sweet puff snack covered with ground peanut known in Tagalog as *linga*. In Pampanga it is known as *taklang pusa* (cat droppings). In some places, I have heard the side dish of fermented rice or *buro* called, as it looks, *sukang pusa* (cat vomit).

So much for food. I also have a long wish list of things I hope to find one day. Foremost is the long lost monograph Jose Rizal wrote on the *mali-mali* or *sakit latar* in Malay. Was this merely descriptive, or did he suggest a cure?

I also dream of finding the long lost letters of Suzanne Jacoby to the national hero that were extant in the National Library before the war but were suspiciously left out of the six-volume compilation of Rizal's correspondence or the Epistolario Rizalino. Then I wonder what Rizal wanted for Christmas in 1996 aside from getting cleared of rebellion charges.

There are so many questions that have not been given corresponding answers. Some of these questions have been posed by Benedict Anderson well over 13 years ago, the most intriguing being: Did Andres Bonifacio dream in color? Or what is the Filipino word for orgasm?

In the unending search for answers, I have learned that more often than not, the process is more rewarding than the answer itself. That is, if I find the answer at all.

Reading up 19th-century accounts for Christmas columns, I came across part of a letter Marcelo H. del Pilar wrote in Madrid in 1890. It was addressed to his wife Tsanay and approximates the experience of thousands of expatriate Filipinos today. I did not translate it from the original Tagalog and share it in the spirit of the season:

"Ngayon ay Pasco tila nakikinita ko ang saya ninyo rian. Ako'y hindi lubhang malumbay sa Pascong ito na para ng isang taong halos lahat ng taong nahihiga sa sakit. Ngayon ay mabuti ang panahon, ang lamig ay hindi lubhang masasal, kagabi ay nagtipin kami nila Rizal, marami kaming taga riang nag noche buena, ang mesa naming kinanan ay ang kaliwang kamay ng bawat isa, at ang kanan ang pansubo: ang kinain namin ay kanin, pavo, lechong may salsang para ng salsa rian, sapagkat ang nangusina ay Filipino. Nang maghiwahiwalay kami ay a las cinco na ng umaga. Ako'y hapong-hapo na kaya hindi ako palalauig."

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

A present for Ninang

DEAR Ninang,

It's your special goddaughter. I don't know how many godchildren you have, but I bet all of us consider you as our favorite *ninang*.

In a letter like this, I would ordinarily be dropping hints about what I want for Christmas. I've been planning to get you a gift myself. Now that I'm older its my turn to give you presents. But I am thinking of you, Ninang, not of gifts.

YOUNG BLOOD

Joanna Paula L. Cailas

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

I am wondering why God didn't give you a family of your own. You were stuffed full of motherly instincts. That was the reason you were asked to be a godmother many times. I have trouble distinguishing who among my cousins are your godchildren. Like a mother hen, you placed us all under your wings whether we were yours in baptism or not.

Because of you I had the cutest stuffed toys and trinkets. And the clothes you gave me I carefully keep in my drawer.

Perhaps you knew that we would be separated by more than distance soon, so you gave me things that would make me feel you're close.

You shielded me from the harsh rays of loneliness. You knew perhaps that I was unhappy and troubled when my family, bankrupt and defeated, moved to Bicol so you took me to the city. We visited the mall. We ate in a restaurant. On the way back home, as we went around that majestic volcano, all my anxieties seemed to vanish. You taught me that things can become perfect, if we give them a chance.

Once you bought me a dress for a Christmas party in school but I couldn't make it. Meningitis forced me to go to the hospital instead.

The next time we saw each other I wasn't quite the same anymore. One of my senses had been snatched away from me. Not hearing your voice was one of the things that made me depressed.

In Manila it took me a long time to adjust. I am not a hermit crab but a turtle so I had to bear it. Four years passed and the shell did grow with me and became less and less forbidding. You were one of the people who made it so.

I know this is a punishment I brought down upon myself. But as for you, well, I wonder how it could be so unfair. Rheumatoid arthritis is normal, diabetes even more so. But cancer? Why did you get cancer while those rapists and murderers in prison get free meals and live there till their old age?

Last July when Ate Joy and I visited you, you had lost a lot of weight. I knew your sweet tooth was worse than mine but perhaps your "episodes" which were getting more and more frequent, had robbed you of your appetite for home-made "sweets." Still, you must have been getting your sugar supply elsewhere because if Mom hadn't tell me, I never would have guessed you were suffering. You may have lost pounds but your laughter was intact.

I can't imagine you crying. Sara Crewe thought loving thoughts could penetrate walls and travel long distances. Maybe crying does, too. Maybe you were crying that evening when I found myself wanting to visit you again and asking Mom why I couldn't. She told me it pained her to see you in pain, to see you crying. She told me she wasn't strong enough to see a dear friend in pain.

I didn't know that. I thought that just like our old neighbor, you would undergo chemo, lose weight, lose hair, get well and gain back weight and have new hair. You were laughing, so you couldn't have been suffering. You were nicer than our old neighbor.

I never dreamed that Saturday would come. What a terrible end to a glorious week. Monday I got belated birthday greetings. Wednesday I received chocolates from my textmate before he flew off to Vietnam. Thursday a long-lost friend reappeared. Friday my textmate sent me a message saying he had sent me a card.

Was I perhaps too late in praying the Chaplet of Mercy for your healing? Or does God love me so much He answered my prayer the best way He could? I didn't ask for it but He did.

I opened the gate for Mom that evening and I thought she was just tired. I didn't ask why her eyes were swollen.

She came into the living room when there was a commercial break on TV. She had all my attention and without telling me to first grab a towel, she gave me the heart-breaking news.

The next day, around noon, we were in Mandaluyong. It never occurred to me, even when I knew that you were more ill than I was, that you would be there in that place while I was still in my teens. When we came into the room and I saw your closed wooden bed, I just couldn't look at you. I caught a glimpse of you inside and I couldn't bear it. I plopped on the nearest seat. I thought I had cried long enough the night before but I still soaked my handkerchief with my tears.

For a whole week, my eyes were itchy. I had always thought I was tough. I always threw exasperated looks when people got gushy and emotional. I never knew that seeing you there would make me cry so much.

I know things just happen. That there is a reason for everything although we don't know it. But I can't keep from asking. Why doesn't fate give warnings before it turns? Why didn't God choose to heal you like He did the bleeding woman? You had faith, too. You endured the burden for long, too. You never gave up either. You followed Him, too. Why didn't He do a miracle? Why did He take you away?

Finally, before going home, I willed myself to approach your casket. As I said my goodbye, I saw the answer to one of my questions. Maybe the mortician didn't do a good job. You didn't look like you "were only sleeping," Ninang. You looked tired. God answered our prayers the best way He could by taking you away from your sufferings—for good.

It's the first time I felt a grief like this. I didn't feel a sadness as deep even when I lost one of my senses. I suppose it is because I don't love it as much as I loved you. I should have known that that July we would have our last embrace. I should have told you that I hold you very dearly in my heart. I should have let you hold me to your bosom much longer.

By now you would have been weeks there in Paradise, Ninang. You would have regained your weight. You would have grown back your hair. You would have kissed Jesus countless time like you used to kiss His images in church. And perhaps, you would have grown wings, too.

Cinderella's fairy godmother, and not her pumpkin coach and dazzling ball gown, is what's etched in my fantasy now. Your were like her, Ninang. You were just as plump. You were just as bubbly. You were just as nice and doting. Like her you showered enough charm in our lives, and then you were gone.

I know this letter will reach you. I hope it will make your Christmas merry like what your presents never failed to make me before.

Thank you so much for everything, Ninang.

Joanna Paula L. Cailas, 17, needs a cochlear implant to be able to hear again. She plans to take up journalism in a correspondence school.

English doesn't spell progress

WHEN I read Solita Monsod's article, "How's our English?" last Dec. 12, I recalled a one-liner that I came across on the Internet: "Me fail English? That's unpossible!" Her article has good points, but I would like to add some observations.

First, English is not a critical determinant of our economic condition. Just compare the Philippines to highly industrialized countries where English is hardly spoken. We may be "better" in English, but it doesn't really make a lot of difference in terms of economic development. What we need instead is a stronger national language (Filipino) that will bridge regional gaps and help achieve economic progress.

Second, English is "an important competitive edge" only insofar as "globalization" is concerned. But whether to go global or not is still a controversial issue.

With regard to "correcting" regional accents of some job applicants, it should be pointed out that such "accents" are not a problem and there is no need to correct them as long as they are not an impediment to the smooth flow of communication. As long as the speaker is able to express her ideas clearly, "accents" should not be a cause for worry.

The kind of English Filipinos speak is simply one variation of the language. There's American English, British English, Australian English and so on. Hence, as long as we are able to understand each other as well as other people, there is no desperate need to reform our English. No nation today can rightfully claim English as its own.

When some of us speak of English, apparently what we mean is American English or talking exactly the way Americans do, including the use of certain linguistic elements that are inherently American. In effect, what we do is merely ape a foreign linguistic culture.

Monsod also mentioned some factors behind the seeming deterioration of the Filipinos' English, one of them being "the series of decisions by broadcast media to use Filipino as their medium of communication, up to the point where canned English TV programs from abroad have been dubbed in the vernacular." The use of Filipino as the basic medium is not wrong per se; in fact, it strengthens our own language. But Monsod's suggestion about using subtitles whether the program is in English or in Filipino is good. In this way, our bilingual capability can be developed.

I would like to cite another factor that seems to affect our kind of English: text messaging. The need to limit characters should not be an excuse to murder the language. The way we write our messages can have a significant effect on our command of English. Habit can affect one's language.

Finally, measures to revive or improve our proficiency in English are okay for as long as they are not done at the expense of Filipino. After all, the native tongue is a good "weapon" against the guile of some foreign interests.

—NINO V. KARE
ninovkare@yahoo.com

Senior citizens' rights still not honored

LAST Dec. 12, I had a serious argument with a Mercury Drug counter personnel over the price of medicine I bought for my sick, senior citizen mother. I carried with me my mother's senior citizen ID card and her prescription. As a senior citizen, she's entitled to a 20 percent discount on her medicines as provided for under Republic Act 7432 or the Senior Citizens Act.

To my surprise, I was refused a discount on the grounds that my mother had no purchase slip issued by the municipality which also issued her senior citizen's ID and I had no authorization letter from my mother to purchase the medicines for her. The requirements are embodied in the drugstore's guidelines on the availment of the discount pasted on its wall.

I politely pointed out to the teller that nowhere in the law does it require that one should have a purchase slip and an authorization letter before he could avail of the discount. In fact, RA 7432 merely provides under Section 4: "The senior citizens shall be entitled to the following: (a) the grant of twenty percent (20%) discount from all establishments relative to utilization of transportation services, hotels and similar lodging establishment, restaurants and recreation centers and purchase of medicine anywhere in the country: Provided, That private establishments may claim the cost as tax credit."

As such, a senior citizen is entitled to the 20 percent discount as long as he could show that she is in fact a senior citizen and that the medicines being purchased are for her benefit. And anybody could purchase for her provided that the latter shows sufficient proof that said medicines are for the benefit of a senior citizen. And what better proof is there than a senior citizen's ID and his/her prescription?

Clearly, the additional requirements were not merely unnecessary but also absurd. The law provides no ceiling about the amount of medicines may be bought. How about the authorization letter? How about comatose patients? Who is going to make the authorization?

What is the point then of requiring such unnecessary documents?

Definitely none, except perhaps to make it harder for the senior citizens to avail of the discount—clearly an indirect means of thwarting the clear intent of the law in granting the privilege.

—RON P. SALO,
10-C Summitcircle, Bayanan,
Muntinlupa City

Maximum SSS benefits given

THIS is to respond to the letter to the editor titled "ECC disability claim kicked around." (PDI, 11/15/03)

The letter pertains to the inquiry of a Social Security System (SSS) member, Narciso J. Villanueva, regarding his appeal for additional disability benefits from the SSS.

Our records show that Villanueva complained of low back pains while working at a sugar warehouse. He applied for a partial permanent disability pension at the SSS after being diagnosed with a lumbar spine injury in 1995.

The SSS granted Villanueva partial permanent disability pension from 1996 to 1997, after he underwent physical examination at the SSS Tarlac office that confirmed his injury.

In 1999, Villanueva requested for additional disability benefits for the same illness but was denied because physical examinations showed no progression of his illness. Also, the SSS had already granted to him the maximum allowable benefit for that particular illness.

Villanueva is questioning why his appeal to the Employees' Compensation Commission (ECC) was remanded to the SSS. In fairness to the ECC, it wanted to know from the SSS why his request had been denied.

We wish to inform Villanueva that the SSS, in its endorsement to the ECC on Oct. 15, 2003, cited the same reasons in denying his request for additional disability benefit for the same illness. There was no progression in his illness and he has received the maximum allowable benefit for that particular illness.

—JOEL P. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, QC

Ruling elite in the military and the PNP

THE FULL-PAGE advertisement of the so-called Primo group within the Philippine National Police led by Police Director Lucas Managuelod, is a square peg in a round hole. It shall render as difficult to reverse the situation that has been the practice in the armed services since time immemorial. And this is the fact and the reality that there are military elites. The 39 signatories to that manifesto should have sat down with UP Prof. Carolina Hernandez for some advice before they resorted to forum-shopping that made them look like they wanted to blow down the whole PNP—by force of arms.

It is a dismal given that commissioned officers who are not alumni of the Philippine Military Academy have accepted since Day One of their active service, be it in the Army, Marines, Navy or Air Force and in this particular case, the PNP. PMAyers are the ruling elite in the military hierarchy. Even the defense establishment is ruled by retired PMAeyrs. The problem raised by Primo will end if—and only if—the PMA will no longer produce graduates to fill the leadership void in the PNP. In a selection process where all things are equal, it is only logical that products of the PMA enjoy the comparative edge.

No other military or police academy worth its salt can produce the quality graduates that the PMA produces every year. Definitely, not the ROTC. While it is true that some ROTC graduates are good, percentage-wise, PMAyers are the cream of the crop. Even by an ordinary qualitative analysis, four years in the PMA with four semesters of ROTC would be like comparing apples with oranges. The PMA produces only the best because in the first place, it admits only the cream of the crop. And since the armed services leadership has yet to become a wholly PMA monoploy, no non-PMAyer has reason to complain. It is part of the territory.

At the very least, the state has spent a lot of money to produce a single PMAyer. It is part of the service contract that alumni must serve in any of the armed services for a given number of years. Otherwise, they have to reimburse all that the government has spent for their four years of cadetship. In a simple return-on-investment analysis, it stands to reason why the government would opt to choose PMAyers over non-PMAyers.

In the end, everything is culture-bound. It would require a "cultural revolution" to change the mind-set of the entire officialdom in the military, police and defense establishment. A higher premium is given to officers produced by the PMA. And as long as it continues to be the prime source of officers to fill the leadership voids in the PNP and the military, such will be the scheme of things. Suffice it to say, what is selective is not necessarily undemocratic. In any organization, everyone can reach the top of the professional pyramid.

—PRIMER C. PAGUNURAN,
UP Diliman, Quezon City

Time for a president from Mindanao

THIS refers to the column of Neal Cruz titled, "After FPJ, here comes APJ," last Dec. 15.

I will not be surprised if Fernando Poe Jr. will slide down to become the vice president of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. or APJ. This is because FPJ has no platform of government while APJ has one firmly established, which is known as "FREEDOM." And an APJ-FPJ team not only sounds good but is also a sure winner.

It's time to replace President Macapagal-Arroyo with Pimentel. This is because under GMA, more Filipinos will go abroad. But if APJ will be elected president, more overseas Filipinos will return to the Philippines because we are sure we will have an incorruptible and competent president. And it is time to elect a president from Mindanao.

—OSCAR LANDICHO,
2 Voyager Point,
NSW 2171, Australia

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Anti-Red war casualty count: 108

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—At least 64 rebels and 44 soldiers and policemen were killed in the government's anti-insurgency campaign in Central and Northern Luzon this year, military records showed.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines' Northern Luzon Command based in Tarlac City also said it captured 68 rebels in the Ilocos, Cagayan Valley, Cordillera and Central Luzon regions.

Nolcom reports said 91 rebels in these regions surrendered to the government.

Among those arrested were top leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

In the Nolcom report, they were identified as Araceli Arciaga, secretary of the Ilocos-Cordillera regional committee; Josephine Perez, political officer of the Ilocos sub-region; Nonoy Soza, secretary of the Venerando Villacillo Front; and Lourdes Mabanag, medical officer of the Cagayan Valley regional committee.

The "commendable performance" of government forces reduced the number of rebels in those regions from 1,526 last year to 1,108 in the first week of December, said Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, Nolcom chief.

About 10,000 soldiers are deployed in the 22 provinces that Nolcom covers, he said.

Of the government forces killed in action, at least 27 were soldiers, 15 were policemen while two were civilian volunteers. At least 51, most of them Army soldiers, were wounded in the clashes, Nolcom reports said.

Dominguez said only 4 percent of almost 8,000 villages in these regions remained under the influence or control of the NPA and its rival communist faction Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan.

Nolcom's figures in its anti-insurgency campaign could not be immediately confirmed with the NPA and RHB regional units.

Military reports also said 10 suspected NPA rebels had been killed in a series of encounters in Quirino, Isabela and Ilocos provinces in the past month. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk, with a report from Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Communist guerrillas celebrate Christmas, too, says NPA leader

LUCENA CITY—Even inside New People's Army-controlled areas, the universal spirit of Christmas is also being felt, especially by children.

"The children of the masses have also been doing the rounds of their relatives to kiss the hands of their elders and greet them 'Merry Christmas.' They also ask for their gifts just like any other children," Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson, said in a mobile phone interview.

Rosal said the children also kiss the hands of NPA comrades in the area. But the children no longer ask for gifts from the NPA because they know, even at their young age, that the guerrillas don't have monthly salaries.

"They even ask food from the children, sometimes," he added.

Rosal also debunked the notion that the practice of one's faith is prohibited inside the revolutionary movement.

"That's part of the propaganda lies being peddled by the military," he said.

He explained that in Red-controlled areas where there is a chapel and a priest to officiate the Holy Mass, people also hear the traditional "simbang-gabi" or dawn Mass.

"It's part of the Filipino Christian tradition and the revolutionary movement respects it."

A highlight of Christmas celebration inside the guerrilla zone, according to Rosal, is the reunion between the NPA comrade and the visiting family.

"That's the best part for most of the NPA members—meeting their families inside the safe confine of the guerrilla zone," he said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Fire prompts ban on sale of firecrackers

By Recto I. Vidal
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO, AKLAN—Mayor Raymar Rebaldo has declared a total ban on the sale of firecrackers and all forms of pyrotechnic materials within Kalibo after fire destroyed about 70 firecrackers on Wednesday along Osmeña Avenue.

Rebaldo said the fire was caused by "accidental explosion" of firecrackers from one of the stalls at about 11 a.m. that destroyed about P1 million worth of property.

"This ... is a clear manifestation of a stern warning...," said the mayor.

The ban, he added, would ensure public safety especially during the Yuletide season.

Fewer cases of blast injuries were reported in the cities of Iloilo, Tacloban and Cebu during the Christmas Day revelry.

Thirty-three blast victims were brought to government hospitals in Cebu City during the Christmas revelry.

Of the number, 17 were treated at the Cebu City Medical Center and six at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (VSMMC). All suffered minor burns in the hands, face and legs.

Dr. Juanito Zuasula, Department of Health regional epidemiologist in Central Visayas, said the figure was lower compared to last year's. He, however, did not say the percentage of the drop.

Stray bullets, however, injured four persons in Cebu City. They were Hajid Abella, 45; Raymundo Panares, 16; Bernaldo Tayong, 21; and Susan Ebena, 35. They were either hit in the leg or knee.

In Iloilo, four persons, mostly children, were treated for blast injuries.

John Michael Juanitas, 6, was admitted at the WVMC for wounds in the face and limbs while two other children aged 10 and 5 were treated for minor injuries and released later.

Larry Hermano Jr., a village watchman, turned over to the Jaro District police station a slug from a firearm of unknown caliber which went through the roof of his house in Barangay M. H. del Pilar. *With reports from Jhunnex Napallacan, Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*

7 fishermen rescued by Viet boat at sea

SUBIC, Zambales—Seven fishermen from this town and Pangasinan had been rescued weeks after they were reported missing at the South China Sea.

On Dec. 18, Vietnamese fishermen found Edwin Bais, 36; Jefferson Pailip, 19; Francisco De Jesus, 33; and Abing Daligdig, 40, all of Barangay Calapandayan here, in the South China Sea.

The four left this town on Dec. 1 on board a boat to fish along the coasts of Zambales. Their relatives reported them missing after they failed to return home on Dec. 6.

Strong winds swept the group's boat across the South China Sea, causing it to capsize. The Vietnamese boat brought them to a coastal area in Balayan, Batangas.

The fishermen reached home on Saturday with the help of the Department of Social Welfare and Development personnel in Batangas.

In Iba town, three fishermen from Pangasinan were rescued by another local fisherman off the Scarborough Shoal in South China Sea on Monday.

They were Jose Guanzon, Sonny Inocencio and Billy Inocencio, all residents of Barangay Cato in Infanta town. They were fishing along the coast of Pangasinan when strong winds battered their boat causing it to capsize.

Allan Limuerdo, a fisherman from Iba, found them struggling for life and brought them to Barangay San Agustin in Iba. *Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

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Editor **Abelardo S. Ulanday**

'Crackers claim early victim as cops enforce ban

By Edson Tandoc Jr. and Luige del Puerto

AS THE New Year celebrations loom, the police have begun to step up their campaign against illegal firecrackers.

Or have they?

A 29-year-old man on Christmas eve lost his two fingers in Valenzuela City after a lolo thunder—an illegal firecracker—exploded in his hand.

Lorenzo Ancas of Karuhatan, Valenzuela City was taken to the Valenzuela City General Hospital for treatment. Police said he was drunk when the accident happened.

In a memorandum dated Dec. 23, the National Capital Region Police Office directed the five police districts in the metropolis to "intensify (the) campaign against illegal or unlicensed manufacturers and dealers of firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices."

The memorandum added that the campaign was meant to "preempt or minimize the number of injuries and fatal accidents related to the use of firecrackers."

Government agencies have long warned the public against the use of firecrackers.

But despite the warnings and police campaigns, loud explosions of powerful firecrackers are still being heard and streets continue to teem with vendors selling illegal firecrackers not only in the metropolis, but also in the provinces.

At press time, there has been no report of any dealer or manufacturer arrested for peddling illegal firecrackers.

NCRPO director Ricardo de Leon had said that the best way to stomp the rampant sale and use of illegal firecrackers was the "arrest and filing of criminal charges against (violators)."

In eastern Metro Manila, the police are bent on doing just that.

Now that the banks have closed for the holidays, the police can go after unlicensed manufacturers and distributors of firecrackers, according to Eastern Police District head Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela.

"The order from the (NCRPO) was to prevent bank robberies," Valenzuela said. "Now that the banks are close, that's one less headache. We are now preparing for the New Year."

The police general warned vendors and store owners against selling prohibited firecrackers, which include Super Lolo and Atomic Big Triangulo.

Other firecrackers considered illegal are bawang, whistle bomb, pla-pla, and lolo thunder.

Under RA 7183, the law regulating the manufacture and sale of firecrackers, violators face imprisonment of six months to one year and a fine of P20,000 to P30,000.

Valenzuela said that the police would be working closely with the Department of Health in implementing "Iwas Paputok," the nationwide campaign aimed at minimizing—if not totally eradicating—firecracker victims, especially on Christmas and New Year's eve.

Local officials have issued similar warnings this week, even as they have expressed confidence in the capability of hospitals and fire units to respond to emergencies.

Mandaluyong City Mayor Benjamin Abalos Jr. has urged residents to visit Policarpio Street, which features beatifully lighted and decorated houses, rather than light firecrackers.

"Celebrate Christmas in a way that would make your neighbors happy," the mayor had said. "Let us minimize the risk to our children. Avoid firecrackers. We don't really need them."

"(But) if we can't really avoid lighting firecrackers, choose the ones with the least fire power," Abalos added. "But avoid watusi."

Watusi, if swallowed, may cause death.

In Marikina, city officials have set up a fireworks display on Dec. 30 at the Riverbanks Amphitheater.

The display is meant to lure residents away from the risk of losing their limbs, according to Dr. Angelito Llavres, assistant city health officer.

The physician said private and government hospitals in the city would be placed on high alert on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31.

All surgeons would also be put on standby, he added.

"Government and private hospitals know the drill," he said. "We briefed them already. I believe we are ready for any emergency."

Motorists breeze through decongested Metro roads

WHAT A breeze.

The motorists' dream of hassle-free highways came true on Christmas Day.

As most people either stayed at home or had already gone to the provinces, major and secondary roads in Metro Manila suddenly appeared "almost deserted," motorists reported.

"Traffic flow has never been this good," said Roy Lumaan, 29, a taxi driver. "See, it took me only 10 minutes to get to Makati City from Pasig City. The streets are almost deserted."

On ordinary days, you're lucky if you could make it in 45 minutes, he added.

Traffic congestion in the metropolis has shifted from bad to unbearably worse especially during the second week of December.

But now, traffic flow on Edsa was not just light, it was wonderful, said Enrique Santos, who drives a Honda Civic. "This is every driver's dream."

He said the only busy streets he had seen were near market places and malls, and in Baclaran. Otherwise, "drag races could be organized anywhere," he said.

Brigido Mata, 57, a jeepney driver in Makati, said he wished traffic flow would be like this everyday. The only downside was that there were few passengers.

"I guess, you can't have everything," he said in Filipino. "But this reminds of the time when there were just very few cars in Metro Manila."

Mata has been driving passenger vehicles since 1969.

Traffic started to ease up on Tuesday, Christmas eve. Just as in previous years, traffic flow would continue to be light until Jan. 2 next year. *Luige del Puerto*

Spread cheer and give us pay, lawmen urge

PLEASE, don't play the scrooge.

Around 500 policemen from the Western Police District are airing this appeal to the Philippine National Police after the lawmen failed to receive President Macapagal-Arroyo's monetary gift which was distributed on Christmas eve, said SP02 Antonio Emmanuel, acting president of the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association, Inc.

Emmanuel said policemen who did not receive the check for P3,500 were those who had been slapped with petty administrative charges and whose salaries had already been forfeited because of various offenses.

The same lawmen have also not yet received their Christmas bonuses that had also been withheld because of the offenses, he added.

"Have pity on the policemen's families, who are also looking forward to the bonuses," Emmanuel said yesterday. "Most of them don't earn that much. P3,500 is a big thing for them. We hope that even that won't be denied them."

WPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong earlier said he would seek the release of the Christmas bonuses in the spirit of the season. But Emmanuel claimed yesterday that it is the PNP headquarters that allegedly refuses to release the money because of its policy of forfeiture of pay for offenses.

Emmanuel also claimed that the said PNP policy is not supported by any policy from the National Police Commission, which has control over the PNP. He said the Napolcom only provides for the forfeiture of salaries, not of bonuses. *Leila Salaverria*

PEOPLE AT WORK EVEN ON HOLIDAYS

Double pay make up for lost time

By Tarra Quismundo

WHILE most Metro Manila residents enjoyed a reprieve from work on Christmas Day, a skeleton force stayed on their posts and went on with their work like they would on an ordinary day.

"I'm already used to going to work during holidays," said Romeo Santos, 47, a security guard in a service center of a telecommunications company along United Nations Avenue in Ermita, Manila. "Besides, it means additional (financial) support for my family."

Santos, who has been a security guard for 20 years, went home to Angeles City in Pampanga on New Year's Eve to enjoy *noche buena* with his wife and two kids.

He came back on Christmas Day and worked the 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift, keeping watch over the service center that has closed for the holidays.

Double the wage

With a minimum daily wage of around P280, Santos said that the day's double pay would make up for the time he spent at work and away from his family.

"There's no problem with my wife and my kids," Santos said in Filipino.

He spent his entire time on duty, sitting on a lone monoblock chair in front of the building he looks after.

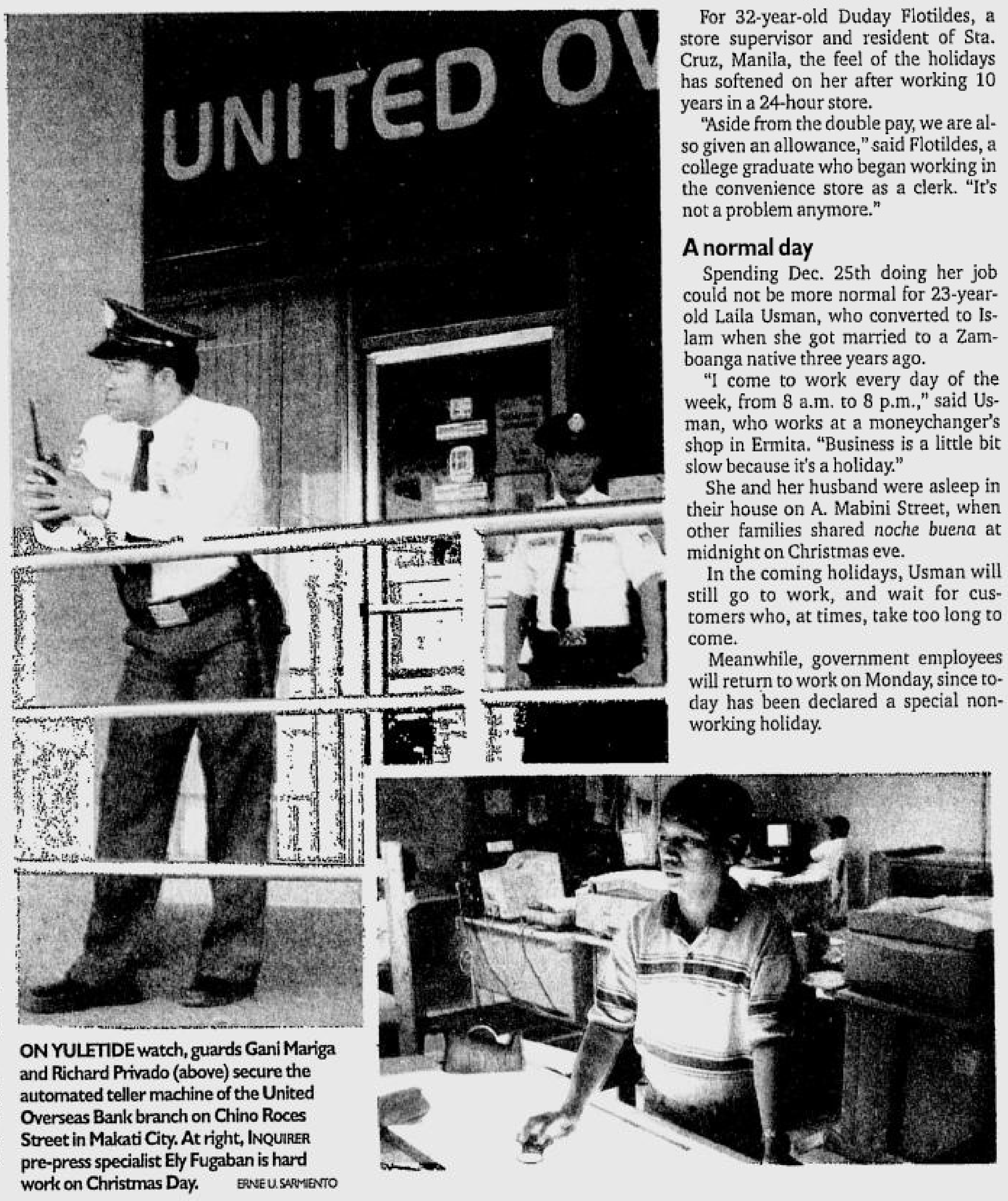
"Here, I just observe the surroundings, and see if anything or anyone suspicious is around."

Santos, who sees himself going on duty as a security guard for as long as he can, is among the dozens of men and women who secure the city's establishments at all times.

Traffic takes a break

There too are the law enforcers, firemen, store attendants, waiters, drivers, street vendors, health workers, and scores of others.

Yesterday, Manila's traffic also appears to have taken a break. The city's main thoroughfares—Roxas Boulevard, España, and the avenues of Taft, Quirino, and Rizal—were not as clogged as on a typical working day.



ON YULETIDE watch, guards Gani Mariga and Richard Privado (above) secure the automated teller machine of the United Overseas Bank branch on Chino Roces Street in Makati City. At right, INQUIRER pre-press specialist Ely Fugaban is hard work on Christmas Day. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

For 32-year-old Duday Flotildes, a store supervisor and resident of Sta. Cruz, Manila, the feel of the holidays has softened on her after working 10 years in a 24-hour store.

"Aside from the double pay, we are also given an allowance," said Flotildes, a college graduate who began working in the convenience store as a clerk. "It's not a problem anymore."

A normal day

Spending Dec. 25th doing her job could not be more normal for 23-year-old Laila Usman, who converted to Islam when she got married to a Zamboanga native three years ago.

"I come to work every day of the week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.," said Usman, who works at a moneychanger's shop in Ermita. "Business is a little bit slow because it's a holiday."

She and her husband were asleep in their house on A. Mabini Street, when other families shared *noche buena* at midnight on Christmas eve.

In the coming holidays, Usman will still go to work, and wait for customers who, at times, take too long to come.

Meanwhile, government employees will return to work on Monday, since today has been declared a special non-working holiday.

Peralejo's driver runs over boy, 5

PERALEJO

By Leila Salaverria

THE DRIVER of actress Rica Peralejo on Christmas eve accidentally ran over five-year-old Jericho Barredo after the parade of stars event in Manila.

Barredo, a resident of Macabalo Street, Marulas, Caloocan City, died at the Manila Doctor's Hospital after Peralejo's driver, Reynaldo G. Liwag, 25, and a resident of San Mateo, Rizal, hit the boy at the back of the Quirino Grandstand along Quirino Street.

P01 Ricardo Peñalosa said that Liwag was driving Peralejo's black Ford Expedition (XDJ-914) and was bound for the Quirino Grandstand to pick up the actress, who joined the parade of stars event for the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

Peralejo stars in the movie "Malikmata," where she plays a psychic who sees dead people.

Police said that at around 5:45 p.m. on Wednesday, Liwag hit Barredo just as he was crossing the street with his parents and brother.

When Liwag realized that he had hit Barredo, the driver got down and took the boy to the Manila Doctor's Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead, police said.

Liwag surrendered to the police after the incident.

He told investigators that he did not see the boy crossing the street.

The driver is still detained at the Western Police District Traffic Enforcement Group headquarters.

Peralejo's Ford Expedition has also been impounded at the traffic office, police said.

Peralejo's movie is among those showcased in the film festival.

She stars with Marvin Agustin and Dingdong Dantes.

Other entries to the film festival include "Crying Ladies," which stars Sharon Cuneta, Hilda Koronel and Angel Aquino, and "Mano Po 2," a film starring Christopher de Leon, Lorna Tolentino and Zsa Zsa Padilla.

Court annuls Benjie Paras marriage to Jackie Forster

A QUEZON City judge has granted the petition of comedian and former Philippine Basketball Association player Benjie Paras seeking the annulment of his marriage to actress Jackie Forster.

In his ruling, Judge Romeo Zamora of Regional Trial Court Branch 94 stated that Forster was only 16 years old at the time of her marriage, and that she is psychologically incapacitated to perform the essential obligations of a married woman.

Zamora also ordered Paras, former player of Shell team, and Forster to comply with the terms and conditions stated in the compromise agreement which they signed on May 31 in the presence of their respective lawyers.

Under the agreement, both parties have agreed that their two sons would be placed in the custody of Paras, real name Venancio Jr. Forster has been granted visitation rights.

The agreement also stated that Paras' real and personal properties would remain his, since the couple had no conjugal assets nor conjugal debts.

Paras was ordered to pay the annual tuition fees of Forster in any school of her choice for three school years of actual enrollment. No other form of financial assistance would be granted to Forster.

The court also allowed Forster to resume the use of her maiden name and ordered the civil registrar of Clark County in Nevada, USA, to cancel the marriage contract of Paras and Forster.

Records showed that the estranged couple got married at the Candlelight Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Dec. 18, 1994 after living together for a few months.

Paras, through his legal counsel Bonifacio Alentajan, filed the petition three years ago, claiming that Forster was psychologically incapacitated to perform the essential obligations of marriage. *Tina Santos*

Seven do not make it to Xmas

VIOLENCE and accidents on Christmas eve claimed the lives of seven people in Metro Manila.

At 4 p.m., Job Nuñez, 29, of Kapalaran Street, Barangay Commonwealth, Quezon City, was fixing an electric connection near his home when he touched an open, live wire.

He was rushed to the Far Eastern University Hospital where he was declared dead due to electrocution.

Three hours later in Manila, Berto Conde, 25, of Perlita Street, San Andres Bukid, was stabbed dead after he accused Ismael Portillo of cheating at a card game.

Witnesses identified Portillo as the attacker. He fled after the incident.

At about 7:30 p.m., security guard Peter Ong Regino, 23, went out of his quarters on 8th Avenue, Caloocan City, to buy food when a certain Angel Garcia suddenly stabbed him repeatedly.

In Taguig, Haron Abas, 32, was plying a tricycle when two of his passengers shot him twice at about 8 p.m.

Abas of Purok 5, Upper Bicutan, died on the spot.

Thirty minutes later, at his cousin's house on Pierre Street, Tandang Sora, Quezon City, Monric Fedelino, 26, fell off the roof.

It was not known why he was up there.

At 9 p.m., Harry Robles, 30, of Purok 7-A, Ilaya, Alabang, Muntinlupa, allegedly stabbed his wife, Maritess, 29, to death.

In Cubao, at 15 minutes to midnight, James Rafael Amolar, 17, of Zambales Street, Cubao, was allegedly stabbed dead by Allejo Mendez, 19, along Bethsaida Street.

And at midnight, Jing Parpa, 30, of Putatan, Muntinlupa, was shot dead by an unidentified gunman. *Margaux Ortiz, Tina Santos and Edson Tandoc Jr.*

The sky as a blanket, the earth as a bed

By Tarra Quismundo

FAMILIES came in droves. Lovers, too. They occupied whatever space they could of Luneta's 48-hectare expanse. And Lucita Dario was there to make their stay more comfortable—even for a bit.

The day was special for it was Christmas, but for 37-year-old Dario, it was just another day at the park; doing business, that is.

"It was just like any weekend," said Dario, who for the past nine years has been selling empty rice sacks for people to sit or lay down on.

Each sack, which she bought in Divisoria for P10, sold for P20.

She went around yelling, "*Panapin! Panapin! ... Sako, panapin!* (Mats! Mats! Rice sacks for mats!)"

On her sacks, people spent the day chatting and savoring the cool holiday sun and cold *noche buena* leftovers with family members.

Around her improvised plastic mats, children played tag or hide and seek. Later, they served as beds for naps.

For these visitors to the "national park," it was a well-deserved getaway from the hustle and bustle of daily Metro Manila life.

But for Dario, it was work, as usual.

And her working day usually lasted through the day and well into the night, save for the three to four hours of sleep that she gets when almost everyone else had left the park.

Good days for Dario would make her around P300.

But, she said, that only happened once or twice a week, depending on the influx of people and the number of competitors, which reach 100.

Dario, a high school graduate from Masbate, and her husband, Romeo, from Samar, slept through Christmas eve and went without the traditional midnight meal.

"We had nothing to spend for a celebration," said Romeo, a construction worker, also 37.

"Life is very hard these days," he added.

So, they spent the night, as they do six nights a week: snuggled while sleeping on a flattened cardboard box insulated by the sacks that Dario sells.

At a spot adjacent the Freedom (formerly Quirino Grandstand), beside a concrete bench that they have considered a second home for the past three years, they had the sky as their blanket and the earth as their bed.

Once a week, the couple, who had been married for 11 years, go home to their shanty in Towerville, Minuyan Proper in San Jose Del Monte in Bulacan.

It was in Towerville where they were relocated after the government demolished their shanty inside the Cultural Center of the Philippines Complex in 1999.

But since their livelihood was in Manila and they had no children, they spent most of their time at the Luneta.

"It is much harder to earn a living (in Bulacan), and vendors like me do not have much to hope for," said Dario, explaining their reason for living in the park.

The same goes for her husband, who only gets contractual jobs in different construction projects in Manila.

Despite the government promise that they would be able to buy the lot which they occupy in Bulacan at a subsidized price, the couple said that they would rather stay at the Luneta.

"Here we have nothing much to pay for, we don't have to pay for electricity and water bills, and we even have a security guard," Dario said in jest.

The park was their "house," with the public toilet along Orosa Street as their comfort and bathroom.

"We pay P2 to use the toilet and P10 to use the shower," Dario said.

Their clothes they kept in a bag and a box, which they hide under "their" concrete bench.

When it rained, the grandstand served as their umbrella.

Their only problem, according to them, are the guards who wake them up in the middle of the night to tell them that sleeping in the park was not allowed.

In cases like that, they sit up and wait till the guard walks away to continue his rounds.

As for their plans of having children, Romeo Dario said the two of them struggle hard enough as it is.

"Our child would just experience how much we suffer," he said.

While very vocal about their hardships, the couple seemed to have already gotten used to their situation.

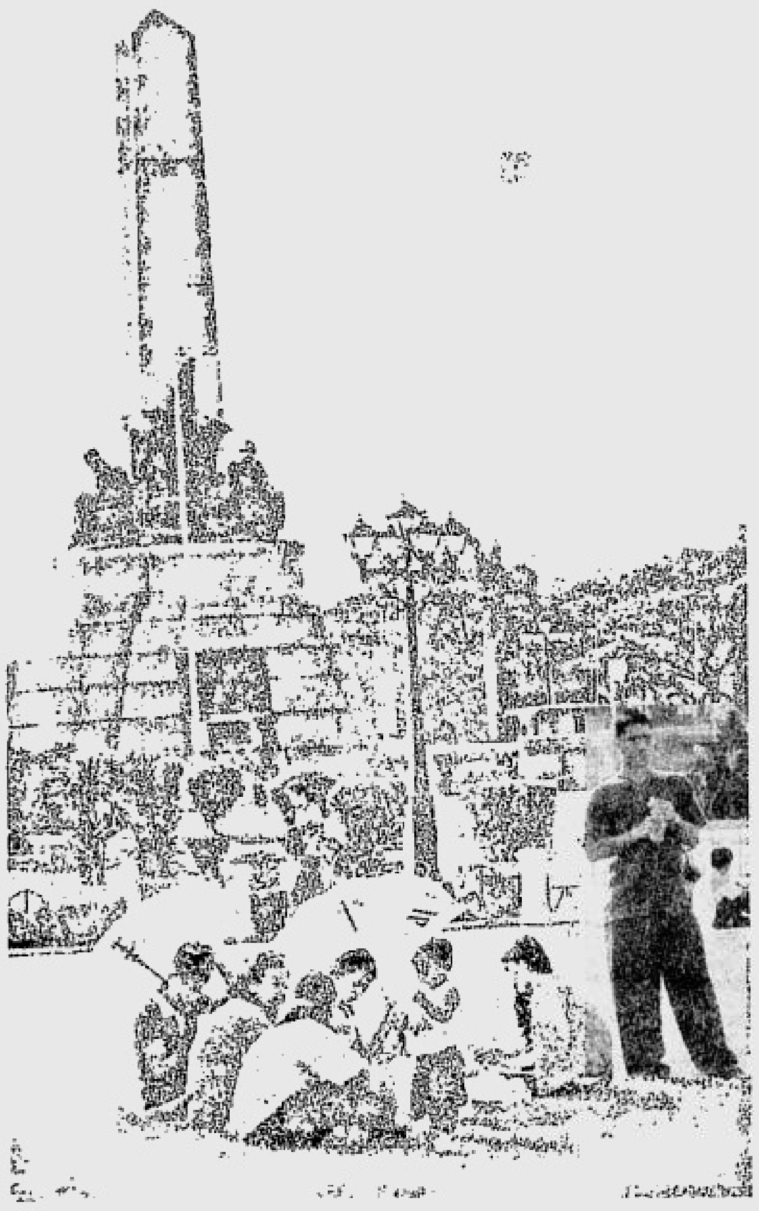
"I don't really know what much we can do," the man said.

"Of course, we could not always depend on the government to give us everything we need. But if God thinks that we should stay this way, then its alright. If God gives us a chance to uplift our lives, then we'll be grateful," he added.

When asked what they would do to get that chance, the couple shrugged and said they were not sure.

In the meantime, Dario had a livelihood to attend to and families to cater to with her plastic rice sacks.

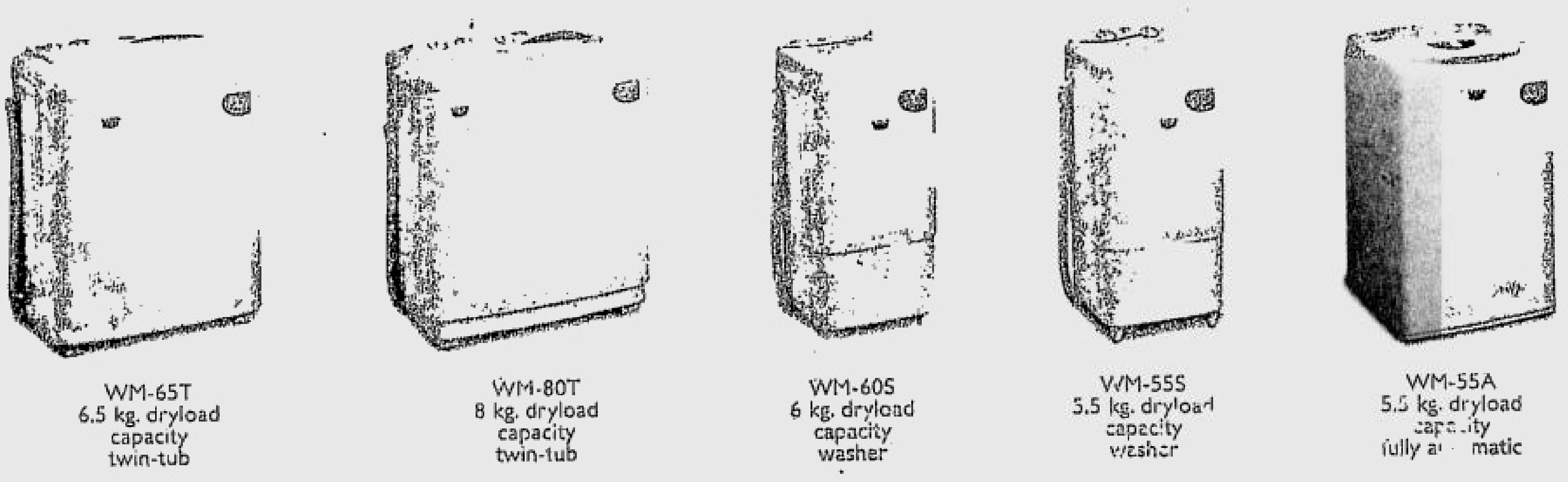
And since Christmas Day was setting, she was eager for doing business on New Year's Day.



FAMILIES spend Christmas Day relaxing at the Luneta, where people like Lucita Dario, who sells plastic mats made from discarded rice sacks, help their visit more comfortable.

ERNIE J. SARMIENTO

Start the New Year clean.



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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA - Mavericks vs Kings, 8 a.m. (r-8 p.m.); Solar Sports; Rockets vs Lakers; 9:30 a.m. (r-5:30 p.m.); Star Sports - Dallas travels to Sacramento in a rematch of last season's western semifinals while Houston visits Los Angles.

Vintage NBA - Rick Barry; 11 a.m. (r - 7 p.m.); Solar Sports - Relive the career of one of the best scoring forwards who popularized the underhand free throw.

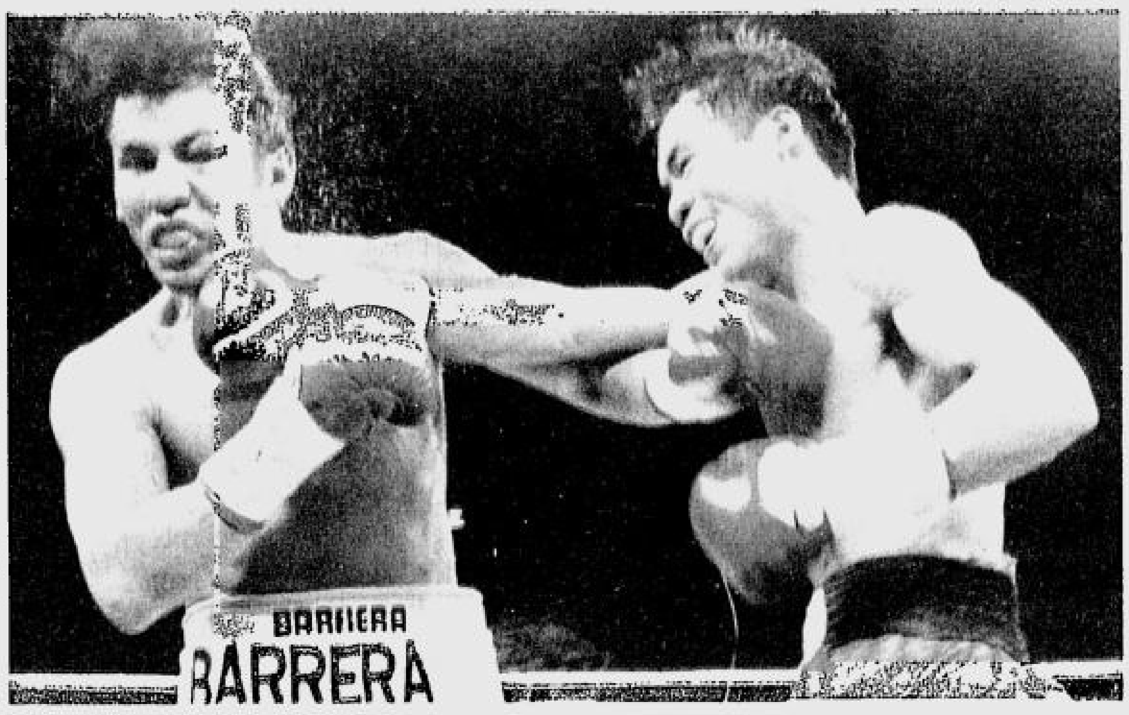
NBA Greatest Game - Kings vs Mavericks; Game 4, 2002 Western Semifinals; 12 noon, Solar Sports - Catch this high-octane match - up over a year ago.

US NCAA - ACC; midnight; Solar Sports - Catch the future stars in one of the collegiate ranks' toughest conferences.

Barrera wants rematch

De la Hoya agrees to set up Pacquiao fight—report

By Salven L. Lagumbay


WOUNDED PRIDE: Barrera (left) reels from Pacquiao's attack during their titanic duel at the Alamodome. REUTERS

Recuperate mi sitio." (I will recover my place.)

With that statement, former pound-for-pound great Marco Antonio Barrera sent word to his Filipino nemesis, world champion Manny Pacquiao, that he is not ducking a possible rematch of their first encounter at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas—which ended in a brutal knockout win for Pacquiao.

"I am sure that I can recover my place. I talk often with Oscar De la Hoya (Barrera's promoter) through the phone and we'll meet in January," the Mexican Barrera told the online edition of Mexico's oldest and most respected sports newspaper.

"The idea is to do a fight, and subsequently to seek the big bouts. It depends on Oscar if he can help me seek revenge against the Filipino. He told me that I can count on it."

Barrera, in another interview with the newspaper, also revealed that he will have a tune-up 10-round bout in March before preparing for a rematch with Pacquiao, the International Boxing Federation superbantam champ.

The report did not say who Barrera will be fighting in March.

Barrera said he will be back in the gym in the middle of January, after a brief vacation either in Japan or Britain.

The planned rematch, however, will have to hinge on the result of the upcoming fight between Pacquiao and dual champion Juan Manuel Marquez of Mexico, set either in the last week of March or in early April.

Marquez is the WBA and IBF featherweight king.

The Pacquiao-Marquez mega-duel is said to be a co-production of HBO and Top Rank Promotions.

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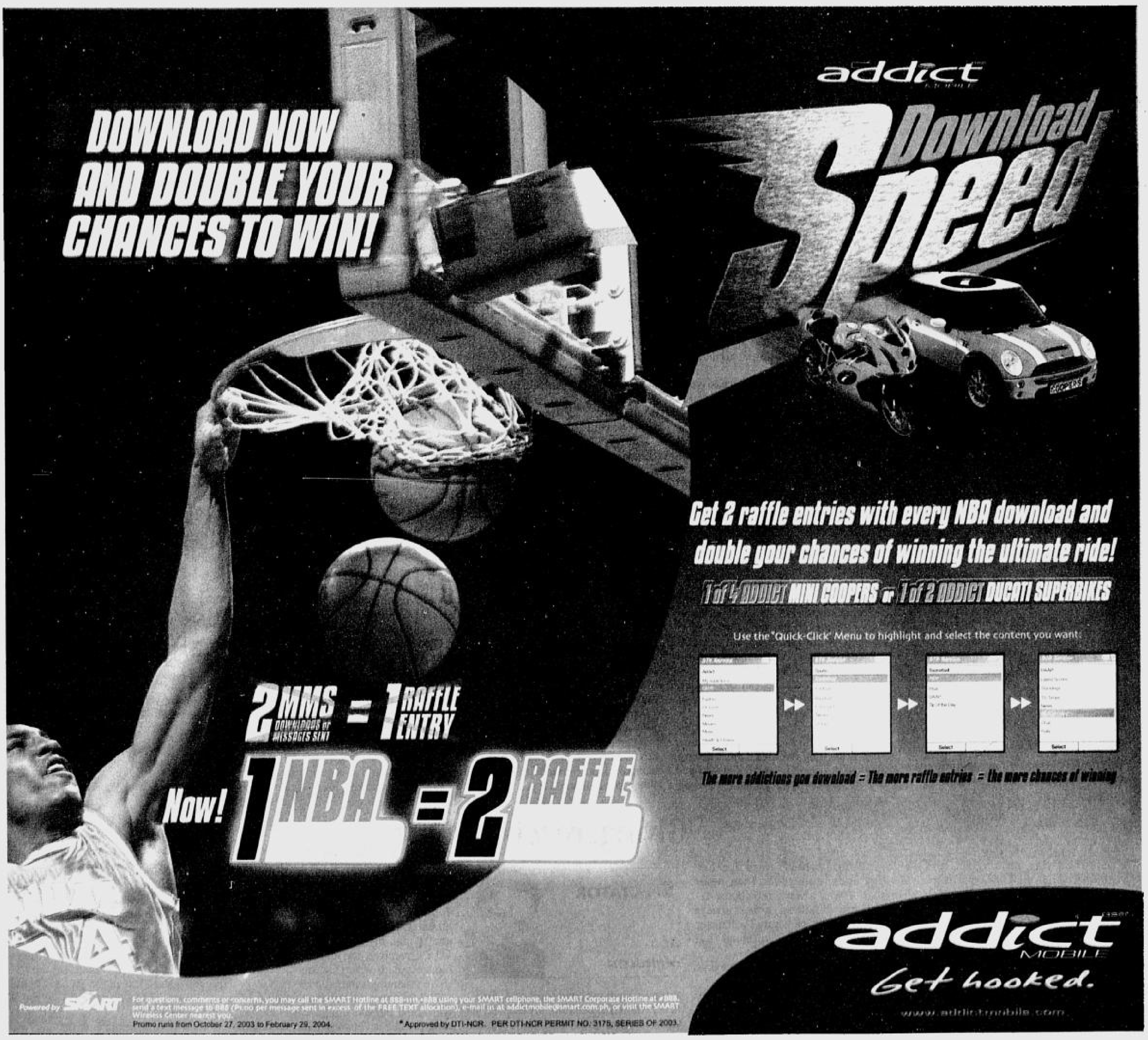
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PSA bares final list of honorees

ATHLETES, officials and friends of local sports gather on Jan. 9 for the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Awards Night, a two-hour event honoring outstanding athletes who made the year a big, memorable one.

PSA president Roberto Cuevas of the Manila Standard said everything is in readiness for the big night, which is expected to be attended by no less than the country's No.1 sports fans, President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

"We are doing our best to make the Awards Night a very memorable one for all the awardees and guests. The association is ready to welcome the honorees and guests. Jan. 9 will be a big day for all of them, for all of us," said Cuevas.

World boxing champion Manny Pacquiao and World Cup of Bowling titlist Christian Jay Suarez head the list of honorees as co-winners of the Athlete of the Year award, their rewards for authoring the biggest sports achievements in 2003.

Other achievers, including the 48 gold medalists in the recent 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam, will also be honored in the rites sponsored by Red Bull and Agfa Colors and supported by San Miguel Corporation, Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee, Philippine Basketball Association and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

Also occupying a place of prominence on the honor roll are Liza del Rosario, Liza Clutario and Cecilia Yap, winners of the gold medal in women's trios in the prestigious World FIQ in Kuala Lumpur.

The three bowlers will receive the PSA President Award, the same honor given by the association last year to the Ateneo Blue Eagles for ending a long title drought in the UAAP basketball wars.

The Antonio M. Siddayao Award, named after the man regarded as the dean of local sportswriters, will be accorded to the Bacolod girls' softball team which won the Junior League World Series in Washington.

The complete and final list of awardees:

Athletes of the Year—Manny Pacquiao and CJ Suarez

PSA President's Award—Liza del Rosario, Liza Clutario and Cecilia Yap

Antonio M. Siddayao Award—Bacolod girls softball team

Hall of Fame—Ben Arda and Celestino Tugot

Major awardees—James Yap, amateur basketball, Asi Taulava, pro basketball, Dorothy Delasin, women's golf; Wind Blown, horse of the year; Mark Paragua, chess; Arnel Quirimit, pro cycling; Pat Dilema, horse racing ; Harry Tañamor, amateur boxing

Citations—Steve Hontiveros, FedEx-Air 21, First Gentleman Foundation, Jojo Cañare, Ronald Dableo, Philippine Track and Field Association, Philippine Bowling Congress, Jayvee Agojo, Philippine Racing Commission, Samsung, Glenn Aguilar, Far Eastern University men's basketball team, Kenneth San Andres, Dottie Ardina, Allenby Jiro Ramos, Miguel Tabuena, Ali Atienza, Lhuillier and Rene Catalan

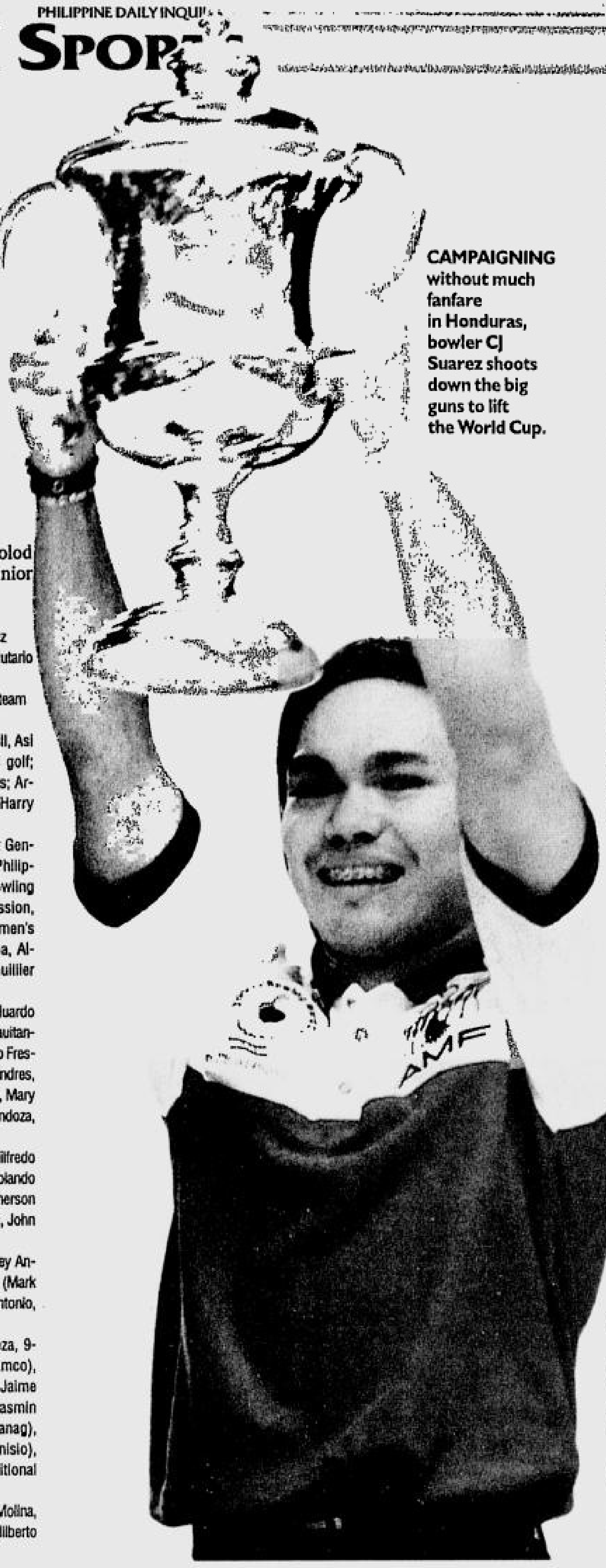
Special citations (SEA Games gold medalists)—Eduardo Buenavista, Emie Candelario, John Lozada, Lerma Bulauitan-Gabito, Rene Herrera, Arnel Ferrera, Allan Ballester, Danilo Fresnido, Arvin Ting, Willy Wang, Eduard Folayang, Dolly Andres, Donald David Geisler III, Veronica Domingo, Dax Morpe, Mary Antoinnete Rivero, Margarita Bonifacio, Walbert Mendoza, Lenita Reyes;

Epee team (Richard Gomez, Avelino Victorino, Jr., Wilfredo Vizcayno and Almario Vizcayno), fencing foil team (Rolando Canlas, Jr., Ruperto Endriano, Jr., Ramil Endriano and Emerson Segui), Marcus Valda, Cris Villanueva, Melchor Tumasis, John Baylon, Gilbert Ramirez, Helen Dawa;

Rapid chess team (Mark Paragua, Eugene Torre, Joey Antonio and Bong Villamayor), Standard chess team (Mark Paragua, Eugene Torre, Bong Villamayor, Roger Antonio, Ronald Dableo);

Miguel Molina, Miguel Mendoza, Lee Van Corteza, 9-ball doubles team (Lee Van Corteza and Warren Kiamco), Neil Faustino, Roel Ramirez, Ryan Rexel Fabriga, Jaime Asok, Gretchen Malalad, women's archery team (Jasmin Figueroa, Jennifer Chan, Rachel Cabral, Jaoann Tabanag), men's trap team (Eric Ang, Jaime Recio, Jethro Dionisio), Eusebio Quinones and men's 500-m team in traditional boat race.

Posthumous awards—Peter Alegre, Percela Molina, Robert Cheng, Rene Fortaleza, Manolet Araneta, Edilberto Gamilla, Pedro Adique and Ramon Lim.



CAMPAIGNING without much fanfare in Honduras, bowler CJ Suarez shoots down the big guns to lift the World Cup.

ATHLETICS YEAR-ENDER

Steroid scandal mars year of stunners

SAN FRANCISCO—Athletics officials often fret about the lack of attention their sport gets.

Not this past year. Sprinters and throwers generated many headlines in 2003—but it wasn't the kind of publicity those officials desired.

Athletics ended the year at the heart of a steroid scandal that has shaken the sports world. At least five track and field athletes tested positive for the newly discovered steroid, THG, and several testified before a grand jury probing a nutritional supplements lab.

In the United States, the probe is focusing on possible drug and tax violations by the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative, or Balco, which has provided some of the nation's top athletes with supplements. The lab also is accused of supplying athletes with THG, which was only unmasked this summer.

Grand jurors have heard from athletes in several sports—ranging from baseball's Barry Bonds to boxer Shane Mosley. But the main focus of the scandal has been athletics.

The steroid was discovered by doping authorities only after an unidentified coach gave the US Anti-Doping Agency a syringe containing a substance that ultimately was identified as THG.

Dwain Chambers, the European champion at 100 meters and a likely gold-medal contender for the 2004 Athens Olympics, faces a two-year ban after testing positive for THG.

Four Americans had positive tests for THG at the US championships this summer.

Drugs also were the biggest story at the World Championships in France, where American Kelli White swept the 100 and 200 meters but could lose those medals after testing positive for the stimulant modafinil.

White claims she used the drug to combat the sleep disorder narcolepsy, but international anti-doping officials scoffed at her claim when it turned out that several other athletes tested positive for modafinil.

The biggest surprise at the World Championships came in the men's 100 m, where Kim Collins of tiny St. Kitts and Nevis won the gold medal. Among the favored runners who got shut out of the medals were Chambers and world record-holder Tim Montgomery.

Pacquiao's next foe comes loaded with 'dynamite'

'DINAMITA' Marquez has 33 knockouts in 44 previous fights.

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

HE owns a killer left hook and two world titles. He is trained by one of the world's finest in the business. With a fearsome record of 42 wins, 2 losses and 33 KOs, promoter Bob Arum has a case in claiming he is the world's finest featherweight. Well, outside of Manny Pacquiao.

Who is Juan Manuel "Dinamita" Marquez? Does he pose a real threat to Manny Pacquiao when they clash sometime in late March or early April? Is he more dangerous than erstwhile pound-for-pound great Marco Antonio Barrera?

Holder of the WBA and IBF featherweight titles, the 30-year-old Marquez is trained by the legendary Mexican Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain, who also trained two of Mexico's greatest fighters of all time: Julio Cesar Chavez and Ricardo "Finito" Lopez. In fact, Marquez's fighting stance, not to mention his facial features, resembles that of Lopez before he retired undefeated.

The 5-foot-7, orthodox-fighting Marquez is also labeled by the boxing media as "The Avoided One," having doggedly pursued—yet failed—to get a fight against then pound-for-pound great Marco Antonio Barrera, Naseem Hamed and Erik Morales. Both Barrera and Hamed, with the help of the WBO, shamelessly ducked Marquez while Morales chose to move up in weight before he could face Marquez.

Marquez's father, Rafael Sr., was also a professional boxer. As a young boy, Juan tried his hand at different sports but ultimately found out his love was really boxing. As an amateur fighter at the age of 12, Marquez compiled a 32-1 record.

"I love sports, any kind of sports. I played basketball and soccer and I even played some tennis. More than anything, I discovered that I really have a passion for boxing," said Marquez, who is also an accountant and spent time during his career working full-time while boxing.

"I worked six years as an accountant for the Mexican government. I took a couple of years off, I went back and worked two more years, and now I am concentrating only on boxing," he said.

Marquez lost his pro debut in May 1993 at the age of 19 by disqualification then came up with a streak of 28 wins with 20 stoppages before losing to WBA champion Fred Norwood in September 1999 with an unpopular points decision (114-112, 115-111 and 117-112).

"Most definitely I thought I won that fight. I think I pressured him all night long. I thought I did the better things that night, but I don't think about it any more. I'm only thinking about the present," said Marquez, whose younger brother, Rafael Marquez Jr., stopped Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson on Feb. 23, 2002 in Las Vegas.

"I don't think so much that I am better now. I think I am more experienced. I think that fight with Norwood was a great experience for me. I think I have had some more fights since then along the way that have given me a little more experience and a little more know-how," he added.

A two-time Nabo champion with seven successful defenses, Marquez lost another world title opportunity as mandatory challenger for WBO champion Prince Naseem Hamed. Not wanting to face him, Hamed petitioned the WBO instead to schedule him for three other fights rather than take on Marquez.

"For two years we were talking about that fight. Even when the Norwood fight came up, we were still thinking about Hamed. No question about it, it was very frustrating for me," he said.

With wife Erica and 3-year-old son Aldo Manuel to support, appearing on HBO against Pacquiao is a tremendous opportunity for Marquez and shows that he is considered one of the best featherweights in the world. "I think every boxer likes to have that opportunity. Not only do you get to show what you can do in front of a lot of people, but it also means that you are at a certain level in your career," he said.

Marquez is 2-1-0, 2 KO's in championship fights with two of those championship fights lasting 19 rounds and averaging 9.9 rounds per bout. His championship loss was dealt by the unorthodox Norwood in 1999 in his first try at the WBA feather title. All his 44 fights lasted a total of 267 rounds. Marquez has 33 KOs in 44 fights (75-percent knockout percentage). So far, he has had 4 first round KOs, 5 in the second round; 3 in the third and 4th; 2 in the fifth; 3 in the sixth; 4 in the seventh and eighth; 1 in ninth; 4 in tenth, and 1 in the twelfth.

Marquez has won 14 straight, 13 by KO since his loss to Norwood. He didn't fight for the title until his 31st pro fight (L 12 Fred Norwood). His brother Rafael is the current IBF bantamweight champ (KO'd Tim Austin on Feb.15, 2003).

Giving, receiving

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

STILL on the giving and receiving this Christmas. The question has been asked a million times: Which is first, the giving or the receiving?

My answer since I was a kid has not changed: None of the above. There is no first, no second. If you give, fine. If you receive, fine. No big deal.

It was, of course, a contrary opinion that my elementary/high school teachers had espoused: Give and next receive.

There were debates on that; I always took the opposite side. Nobody won, the teachers would say. But I felt I always lost. Proof: I got low grades in good manners and right conduct. Consistently. That's why I never got to be valedictorian. Aha, now I am talking (sulking?). But I didn't care. Never gave a hoot. Couldn't care less. I had my Beatles. My long hair, too, despite my rank as PMT company commander. Those who cared—mostly they were the conformists—they got high marks. That's because they were the high-grade lovers. Never was I like that. Modesty aside, even today I am never like that. I was always rebellious, rebelling if you will. Rebels almost always finish last, right? It's a luxury I will never trade, even for a trip to Graceland (but not to Liverpool?).

But not to brag, I guess I always gave since I was a kid. Still do.

Gave my teachers hell, as in constantly arguing with them on almost every issue debatable under either the sun or moon.

Gave my teachers heaven, as in constantly acceding to their pleas that I sing mornings of Monday programs in high school.

All those times that I had given something from my soul (singing, if not poetry writing, is a taxing, soulful work), never thought for a second I should receive something in return. The high grades, you say? Honest, never have I yearned for them. I sang a couple of Beatles songs once, during a regional press conference that my school had hosted, in response to a request from my head teacher. At first, I never wanted to perform. My teacher, Ms Luisa Bautista (bless her soul), wanted me to do Elvis Presley. I refused.

"Ma'am, that'd be blasphemy," I told her. "Don't you know I am a Beatlemaniac?"

I won my case. In return, Ms Bautista gave me a low grade, a move strongly protested by many of my classmates, who were mostly my fans (ahem!). Years after graduation, me and Ms Bautista (she never married) became the best of friends.

OK, you want more high school stuff?

I wasn't first to my teachers but, modesty aside, I was always tops as far as my batch mates were concerned: I got the loudest cheer, a standing ovation even, when I climbed up the stage as one of the Top 10 graduates during graduation ceremonies. I knew I gave it my best shot, and though my teachers thought otherwise, I received the shot that mattered most: Applause from my peers.

No greater gift than that.

The giving and receiving should always be a normal thing. As the Beatles sang it, "Life is very short and there's no time for fighting and fussing my friend."

I'm not saying the practice of exchanging gifts in our classrooms to cap the Christmas program before the Christmas vacation isn't nice. It is. In fact, it trains the kid to be a giver all his life.

But still, despite passionate lecturing, if not pleas, from my teachers to participate in it when Christmas was near, I didn't take heed that much. I didn't give "that much" when I was in school, simply because, believe you me, I had, most of the time, nothing to give. No, we weren't exactly that poor. You can ask people who know my roots. I did give, but it was not of the wrapped variety. What I gave mostly were from the soul, if not from the heart. If not a drawing (my classmates paid me 10 centavos each for colorful illustrations for album projects), a poem. When I was in the mood, I belted out Beatles songs. What did I get in return? Applause.

That was more than enough.

***

FASTBREAK. Dr. Myrna Tomelden-Soriano, who retired a colonel in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, died last week. Her remains were laid to rest in New York City on Dec. 20. She was the wife of Amado Calicdan Soriano, the Mangatarem-born Ateneo law school product based in New York-Florida the last 40 years or so. The departed doctor was one of the best ever aunts I ever had. You will be missed, Auntie.

Sprewell fined $25T for cursing at ex-boss

NEW YORK—Minnesota's Latrell Sprewell was fined $25,000 (P1.38 million) by the NBA for cursing at New York Knicks chair James Dolan and screaming at the team's bench during the Timberwolves' 98-92 win Tuesday night.

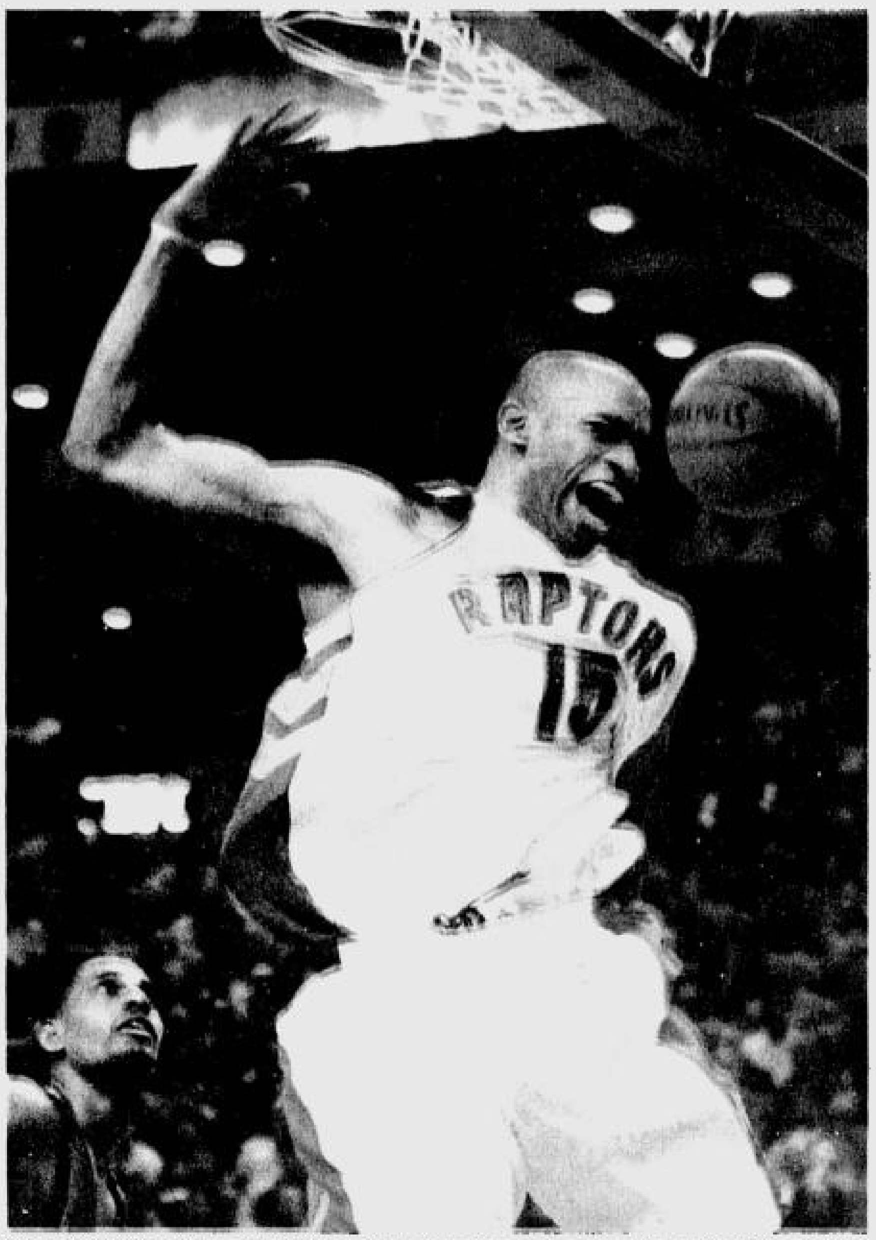
The penalty was issued Wednesday by NBA senior vice president Stu Jackson.

BAD BOY: Sprewell

Sprewell, who was traded to Minnesota and scored 31 points in his return to New York, turned to his ex-boss, Dolan, and unleashed a stream of curses after his 3-pointer gave Minnesota a 94-89 lead with 1:14 left.

Referee Dan Crawford came over and warned Sprewell to stop during the ensuing timeout, but Sprewell kept it up anyway and directed his next rant at the Knicks' bench. The tirade earned him a technical foul.

Sprewell began screaming at Dolan during the first quarter, the first expletive-filled harangue making Dolan blush. Sprewell turned and shouted at Dolan several more times during the course of the game. *AP*


TORONTO Raptors guard Vince Carter has been the top vote-getter three of the last four seasons. AP

Carter leads All-Star vote; Kobe third

NEW YORK—Toronto Raptors forward Vince Carter remained the leader in fan voting for the NBA All-Star Game after the second returns were announced on Wednesday.

Carter, the top vote-getter three of the last four seasons, has 1,134,147 votes. He has joined Michael Jordan and Julius Erving as the only players to lead in votes three or more times.

Detroit Pistons center Ben Wallace, last season's Defensive Player of the Year, remained second overall and has the biggest lead at a position. Wallace has 995,572 votes, more than 700,000 in front of New Jersey's Alonzo Mourning.

Mourning was released from the hospital earlier this week after undergoing a kidney transplant. While he has not ruled out a possible comeback, it will not be soon as he must wait to be certain his body does not reject the new kidney.

Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant is third overall and tops the Western Conference with 936,281 votes despite being the subject of a sexual assault trial involving a teenaged woman in Colorado.

Bryant's teammate Shaquille O'Neal has collected 835,331 votes while Houston's Chinese star Yao Ming has 693,272.

Yao's teammate Steve Francis is second among West guards with 465,982.

Philadelphia 76ers guard Allen Iverson, who is sidelined with a knee injury, is fourth overall with 927,769 votes.

Orlando's Tracy McGrady is second among backcourt men in the East with 655,560, while New Jersey Nets point guard Jason Kidd has 596,906.

San Antonio's Tim Duncan, last season's Most Valuable Player, has 885,872 votes to lead forwards in the West. Minnesota's Kevin Garnett is right behind with 877,622, more than 500,000 atop Germany's Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas.

Indiana's Jermaine O'Neal takes the East's second forward spot with 872,476.

The 53rd NBA All-Star Game will be played in Los Angeles on Feb. 15. *AFP*

Holiday gifts for the needy

JACKSONVILLE, Florida—The 16 players at the Target World Challenge had all left with their loot from the $5 million tournament when caddie Dave McNeilly wandered into the press room in search of the prize distribution chart.

McNeilly works for Padraig Harrington. He had no idea the purse was so high for a tournament that doesn't even count, so when it was suggested that his man did well— $500,000 for third place—McNeilly was skeptical.

His eyes about popped out of his head when he saw the amount on a piece of paper, realizing his take would be significant.

"Bloody, hell!" McNeilly said, a mixture of shock and delight, and he walked into the night with a big smile.

Everybody needs something around the holidays, although not everyone needs money.

- **Davis Love III needs better timing.**

He hit the most clutch long-iron shots of the year, a 4-iron into the 18th green to win at Pebble Beach. He had the best final round of the year, a 64 in windy conditions at The Players Championship. He had one of the year's most dramatic finishes, chipping in from 70 feet on the final hole to force a playoff at Hilton Head.

LOVE

Love simply picked the wrong weeks for his heroics.

- **David Duval needs hope.**

Coming off his worst season, Duval started 2003 with a 65 at the Bob Hope Classic and then went into a nosedive. He made four cuts in 20 events, none of them majors. The last time he worked Sunday was June 8. He started the year at No. 15 in the world, and ended at No. 242.

Tiger Woods was asked what he considered the biggest surprise of the year. He didn't say Ben Curtis at the British Open or Annika Sorenstam holding her own at the Colonial.

DUVAL

"To see one of my friends struggle as much as he did—Duval," he said.

- **Phil Mickelson could use some patience.**

Not since Tom Kite has anyone been under this much pressure to win a major championship. Kite won 16 times in his first 20 years when he captured the 1992 US Open at Pebble Beach at age 42.

Mickelson, 33, has won 21 times in his first 11 years. He's coming off his worst season ever. He failed to win for the first time since 1999, finished 38th on the money list and did not qualify for the Tour Championship for the first time.

Mickelson went on a media ban the final three months of the season, saying he was tired of taking "pot shots." One of these days, he'll realize that just about everyone—media included—want to see him win a major.

- **Woods needs a victory at the Nissan Open.**

Perhaps even more peculiar than Mickelson not winning a major is Woods' failures at Riviera. He's played the Nissan Open six times without winning.

Woods made his PGA Tour debut at Riviera as a 16-year-old and grew up about 20 minutes away. The only big tournament Jack Nicklaus never won was the Canadian Open, played primarily on a Glen Abbey course he designed. Is Woods headed down that road? *AP*

Mosley's just Wright for 'Winky'

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—Ronald "Winky" Wright received the Christmas present he wanted most—a chance to fight fellow American "Sugar" Shane Mosley for the undisputed world super welterweight crown.

Promoter Gary Shaw announced here Wednesday that Mosley has agreed to a unification showdown here on March 13, the first time in 29 years that the 154-lb division crown will be unified.

Southpaw Wright, 46-3 with 25 knockouts, owns the International Boxing Federational crown in the weight class. Mosley, 39-2 with 35 knockouts, owns the World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association titles.

Mosley was set to fight Nicaragua's Ricardo Mayorga in March, but Mayorga lost a welterweight unification showdown to Cory Spinks earlier this month at Atlantic City.

"Mosley-Wright is the biggest fight in their division," said Shaw, Mosley's promoter. "Everyone has had an excuse for not fighting Sugar Shane or Winky.

Mosley captured the WBC and WBA crowns by taking a 12-round unanimous decision from "Golden Boy" Oscar de la Hoya here last September in the American rivals' long-awaited rematch of Mosley's 2000 WBC welterweight title triumph.

"I've accomplished a lot in my career," Mosley said. "No one has defeated de la Hoya twice and not many can boast three world titles in three different weight classes.

"Now I want to add the undisputed 154-pound world championship to my trophy case. History is always a little sweeter when you add some Sugar to it." *AFP*

A league of our own (in Birmingham)

By Raj Padilla
Contributor

BIRMINGHAM, England—In a country that has a clear and prevailing bias for football, playing basketball is the least of the people's passions.

But Filipino expatriates here refuse to be drawn to the game that Britons go wild about; they continue to embrace basketball as their sport of choice.

Never mind if it might not sit too well with the 60 million people of this football-crazed nation where the sport was born in 1871 and where the world-famous quadrennial event, the World Cup, traces its origin.

No measure of discouragement like this one could hold back Brendo Rivera and his basketball *barkada* (group).

Desperately in need of a congenial pastime, they came up with what came to be known as the Filipino Birmingham Basketball League (FBBL) here.

JUBILANT cagers of the Royal Orthopedic Hospital, with families and supporters, after winning the first tournament of the Filipino Birmingham Basketball League (FBBL), the first all-Filipino sports league in Britain. RAJ PADILLA

The venue

Rivera, a native of Masbate province, said he came up with the idea of staging a basketball league shortly after he was invited to join a paint-ball competition one autumn day last year.

"But why settle with paint-ball when we can have our own basketball league?" the 42-year-old Rivera recalled telling his friends, among them Francis Quinon of Iloilo and Sherwin Deocadis of Manila who would eventually help him run the league.

"First, we scouted a place where we could play basketball during off-duty days. After we discovered the Munrow Sports Centre and made arrangements to use it during the weekends, we invited other Filipinos to join us," Rivera narrated.

The Munrow Sports Centre, which has a 500-seat capacity basketball gym, lies in the heart of the main campus of the University of Birmingham, a leading research-based university in Europe.

Rivera, who is married to a Filipina nurse, the former Cecilia Malapitan of Cebu by whom he has four children, said they didn't have a hard time scouting for a standard and suitable basketball venue since he works as a porter at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on the university campus.

"As months passed, the Filipinos who played with us during the weekends grew in number that we felt the time had come to consult them about our plans. It turned out that all were just waiting for it to happen," said Rivera, a business management graduate of the University of the East.

Rivera said they agreed to start with eight teams representing hospitals scattered in the West Midlands region. Those who signed to play in the league were mostly nurses and dependents of Filipino female nurses who also work in hospitals as caregivers, porters, domestic assistants and the like.

Maiden tourney

And, since everyone was aware of the cost of staging the league's maiden tournament, each of the teams chipped in £750 (P70,120) as registration fee.

Located in the heart of Britain, the West Midlands has a population of about six million and is the country's manufacturing and agricultural heartland.

"Initially, we planned to launch it in the last week of May, but since the uniforms weren't ready yet, we moved the opening to June 8. It's fortunate that people from the Philippine embassy in London found time to grace our opening ceremonies," he said.

Gilberto Asuque, minister and deputy permanent representative of the Philippines to the International Maritime Organization, led the embassy officials in the opening ceremonies.

The eight pioneering teams were the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Royal Orthopedic Hospital, Sandwell Hospital, Heartlands Hospital, Priory Hospital, Coventry Hospital, Selly Oak Hospital, and the Dependents.

Rivera said their opening rite, though not spectacular, was colorful enough to keep Filipino spectators amused.

Special awards like the Best in Uniform and Best in Muse were given out. Entertainment numbers showcasing Filipino talents were also featured.

First all-Filipino league

Rivera later learned from Asuque that the FBBL was the first-ever all-Filipino sports league in Britain.

After 11 weeks of play, the Royal Orthopedic Hospital emerged champions, beating the tough Heartlands Hospital five, 88-75, in an emotionally charged championship match.

"We felt very much inspired by what we had accomplished. This was only the beginning and there's a lot more to be done just to keep it going. For one, in order that the tournament will survive in the coming years, we need to have our own sponsors," Rivera said.

He admitted that there were not too many Britain-based Filipino business people who stepped forward to offer help before the start of the league. But he's pretty sure that with their success now, they would not have a hard time wooing them next season. Next year, they expect the number of teams to increase to 16.

"Even when we had fixed the June 8 opening, there were still a few more teams wanting to participate. But we had to turn them down because we lacked money," Rivera said.

Rivera knew from the start how financially difficult it was to sustain the league. Aside from the gym rentals, they also had to pay the two British referees £17 per game.

A self-confessed Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) fan, Rivera is no stranger to playing league roles. While he was still in Kuwait, where he worked for 15 years as a warehouse manager for Rover Cars, he headed the Visayas-Mindanao Expatriates in Kuwait (Vimexku), whose team also saw action in both the Philippine Amateur Basketball Association in Kuwait and the Kuwait Pinoy Basketball tournaments.

And just like in Kuwait, they also saw a lot of talents in the Birmingham league that can play with fire in their belly. The average height of the players was 5 feet 8 inches and many of them have had experiences with varsity teams during their college and high school days.

But from a simple pastime, Rivera's group hopes to see the league take on a more prominent role one day. They want the league to get involved in the promotion of the welfare of Filipinos both in Britain and at home.

"There are still many of our countrymen out there who need every help that we can give. Over time, we're confident that the league project will catch fire and galvanize support. Then, we will be in a better position to extend assistance," he said, referring to those who work but earn little in Britain.

"Somehow, we wanted this to be the jumping board for a bigger feat. We also would like this to help strengthen Filipino communities here in Britain," he said.

In the Birmingham area alone, there are about 10,000 Filipinos. In the entire Britain today, there are between 80,000 and 100,000, many of whom are employed with the National Health Service (NHS) Trust-run hospitals and nursing homes.

Extra mile

Rivera and his pack have gone the extra mile. But as to where this daring experience would one day lead, nobody exactly knows. Being in its infancy stage, the project remains a shot in the dark.

With the staging of FBBL, however, a seed has been planted and, with apt sustenance, will grow and bear fruit even in a place that's a long journey from home.

"Que sera, sera," Rivera said.

True enough, whether in the Philippines or abroad, basketball has gotten into our system and has proved to be the elixir that keeps the Filipino spirit burning.

Stars help comfort . . .

From page A21

the week when one of their children would celebrate their birthday. Instead of holding a party, they decided to spend it with the kids of Kythe.

Lauden idolizes Angelika de la Cruz and knows all the characters in the soap where her idol starred. The girl's wish to come face to face with Angelika happened on the set of a TV soap. Angelika took time off from her taping to attend to Lauden and gave the girl a shirt similar to what she was wearing at the time of the visit. Lauden also went home with a photograph of her with her favorite actress.

Rashid, 11, who has leukemia, never thought that he would finally meet his idol, Francis M, in person. Like the famous rapper, Rashid is into hip-hop songs and knows all Francis M's songs by heart. The star-struck little boy visited Francis M on his daily noontime show, "Eat Bulaga," and the two bonded like long-lost father and son. Francis M gave Rashid a CD with his dedication.

These are only some of the artists whose generosity has touched the children of Kythe. Despite their fame and fortune, they still find time to go back to what is truly essential—to give not so much of material things but of themselves so that others may heal.

DID YOU KNOW...

Robin Padilla, who stars in ABS-CBN's soap "Basta't Kasama Kita" with **Judy Ann Santos**, was doing some last-minute shopping at Rockwell's Power Plant Mall in Makati City last Monday. Binoe was wearing dark shades, but people still easily spotted him. In Rustan's Supermarket at the same mall that night were singer/stage actor **Calvin Millado** and his wife Muffin, who were married early this year.

Araneta Center
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Ali 1	MANO PO 2
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Ali 3	CAPTAIN BARBEL
Ali 4	CRYING LADIES
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Ali 6	FANTASTIC MAN
Ali 7	HOMECOMING

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MAXIM	CLOSED
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ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY 'LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	ALIPIN
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PIÑAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARAÑAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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MALIKMATA PG13 1:25, 3:35, 5:45, 7:55, 10:00	CRYING LADIES PG13 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	FILIPINAS MAY ISANG INA GP 1:40, 3:50, 6:00, 8:10, 10:20

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2 FANTASTIC MAN	7 HOMECOMING	2 MALIKMATA 11:05, 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:25, 9:30	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 2 HOMECOMING	2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FANTASTIC MAN	GLOW Dec. 29 & 30 - 8 pm	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FILIPINAS	FANTASTIC MAN
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2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MALIKMATA

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(Pasay) tel 833.3290 833.3274
1 MANO PO-2
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN

Starmall Movies
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(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
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2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 HOMECOMING
5 MANO PO

METROPOLIS Star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
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3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 MALIKMATA
6 CAPT BARBEL

Star www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Piñas) tel 873.5004
1 FANTAS
2 CAPT BARBEL

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(Makati City) tel 892.2503

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1 MANO PO
2 FANTASTIC MAN

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376
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2 CAPT BARBEL
3 HOMECOMING
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

GOTESCO CINEMA
Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588
5 MALIKMATA
6 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7 CRYING LADIES
8 HOMECOMING
9 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781
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2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES
7 CAPT. BARBEL
8 CRYING LADIES
9 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Commonwealth
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1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
5 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Ortigas
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2 FANTASTIC MAN
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2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 MALIKMATA
4 KONG MAHAL
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Berma Cinema
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2 MALIKMATA

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Araneta Center
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1 MANO PO
2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 CAPT. BARBEL
4 CRYING LADIES
5 MALIKMATA
6 FANTASTIC MAN
7 HOMECOMING
8
9

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 MANO PO
4 CAPT BARBEL

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
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2 CRYING LADIES
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926
1 MANO PO
2 HOMECOMING
3 CRYING LADIES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 RUGRATS THE MOVIE
2 WISHER
3 CABIN FEVER
4 MR. BONES

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 HOMECOMING
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel (075) 568.6771
1 MANO PO
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 MALIKMATA

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 CRYING LADIES
2 MALIKMATA
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel)
1 MANO PO-2
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 SOON TO OPEN

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 HOMECOMING
4 MANO PO-2

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
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2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA
4 MANO PO-2
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883
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2 HOMECOMING

Olivarez Los Baños
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2 MALIKMATA
3 HOMECOMING

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(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 CAPT BARBEL
2 MANO PO
3 CRYING LADIES
4 FANTASTIC MAN

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(Laguna City) tel 520.8914
1 MANO PO-2

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 MANO PO
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
4 CAPT BARBEL

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1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 MALIKMATA

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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Louie C. Camino**

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

JUDAY decks the halls of her Café Carabana in Quezon City for the holidays, after spending precious moments with the children of Kythe (below).

Stars help comfort the sick

By Peachy Vibal-Guioguio
Contributor

NICA, 13, was suffering from leukemia and had been undergoing extensive chemotherapy for six months. She fervently wished to meet her idol, Regine Velasquez, and have her picture taken with the songbird.

Wish granted. Nica, together with other pediatric cancer patients, visited the Sunday noontime show "SOP" and finally met her idol in person. Not only did Regine pose for a picture with the enthralled Nica, but she also serenaded her with the child's favorite song, "Dadalhin Kita sa Aking Palasyo," that left everyone in the studio teary eyed.

Three months later, Nica passed away.

"Kythe Foundation usually prioritizes the wishes of terminally ill kids for obvious reason," explains Allan Cabisaga, child life specialist of Kythe. Kythe is derived from the Scottish word "kayth," which means healing through simple loving, sharing and togetherness. Its mission is to provide psychosocial support to pediatric cancer patients and their families and increase awareness of pediatric oncology through educational research and, in the process, strengthen hope in the pediatric cancer patients and their families. It is a pioneer in the implementation of the Child Life Program for child cancer here in the Philippines.

ACTION SPEAKS louder than words with action star Ronnie Ricketts (middle), another friend of Kythe's kids.

"Most kids here at Kythe write in their 'Make-A-Wish' form that they want to meet their idols, usually local talents," says Cabisaga. Kythe then seeks appointment with the identified talents through their networks and contacts. And Kythe hardly gets turned down.

When a personal meeting is not possible, which is rare, it is usually because of the talent's and the kids' conflicting schedules.

Michael meets Bitoy

There are many more in show biz who go out of their way to make the wishes of dying children come true. Take the case of Michael V, whose namesake, Michael, requested to meet the talented comedian. "Bitoy" visited the kid in the hospital and tried all the tricks up his sleeve to make Michael smile, but to no avail. The kid was stoic all throughout Bitoy's visit, so the comedian asked to be left alone with Michael for a few minutes.

"When Bitoy came out, you could see that Michael's demeanor had changed," recalls Cabisaga. "His mood suddenly lightened up. And Bitoy also came out of the room happy. We never found out what happened in the room, but it was enough that he made Michael smile."

Michael died a month after Bitoy's visit.

Singer Timmy Cruz is also a regular of Kythe Foundation. Not only does she volunteer during special events, she is also a regular donor.

The Kythe kids also saw a lot of Patricia Borromeo, who succumbed to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. A pre-school teacher, Patricia taught the kids arts and crafts every week. She chose to celebrate her birthday last year with all the kids of Kythe. She treated them to a day of rides, games and surprises.

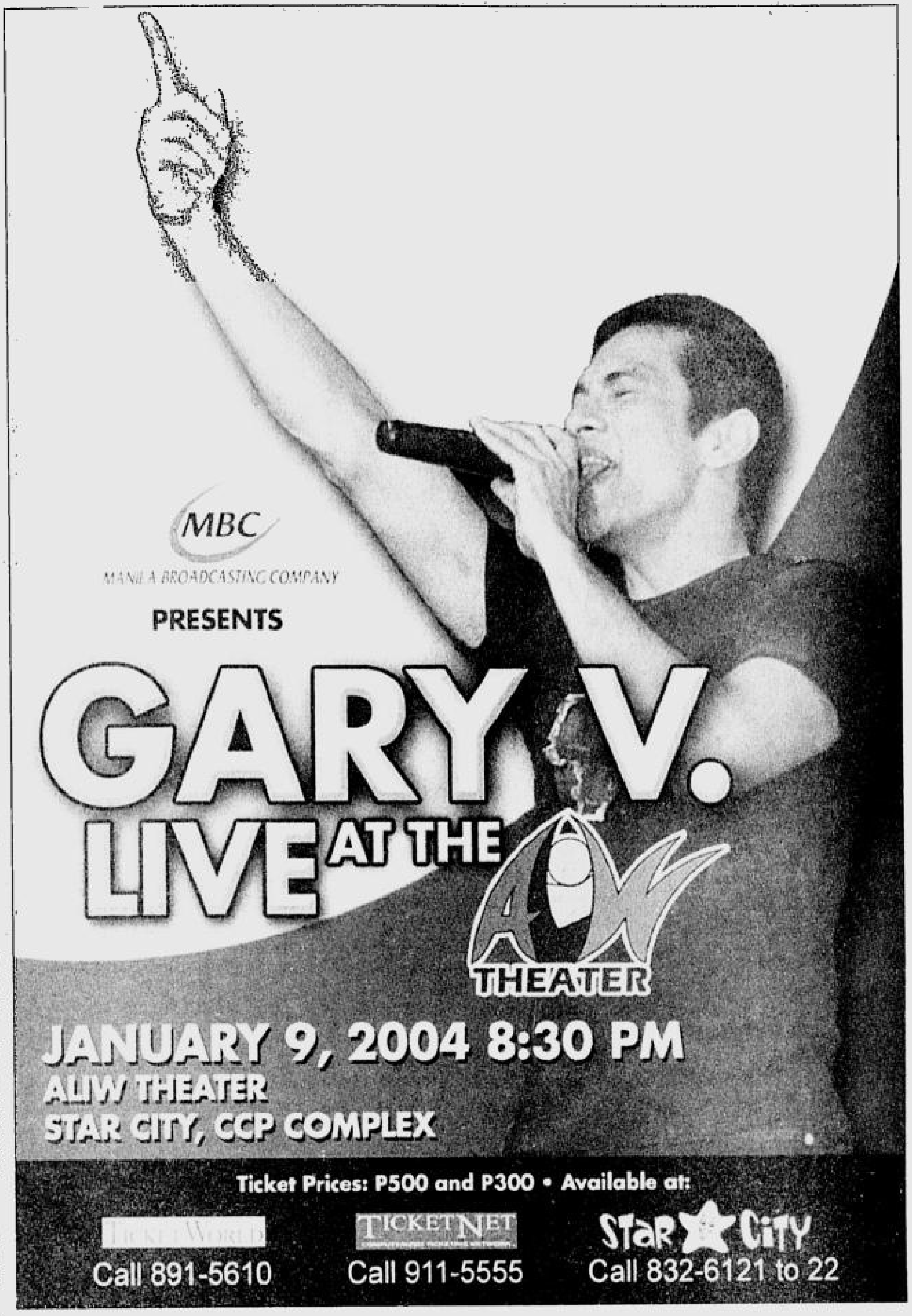
It was also to be her last party with them.

So others may heal

Actor Ronnie Rickets and his wife Mariz contacted Kythe when they read about the National Cancer Consciousness Week. It was

STARS/ A20

SONGBIRD Regine Velasquez alights at Kythe and visits with leukemia victim Nica (right, in hat) and other children.



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Holiday treats

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

ALL sorts of shows are being staged for holiday revelers. Here are some standouts:

At the Araneta Coliseum, ongoing until Jan. 4, Disney on Ice presents "Beauty and the Beast." The glittering show dramatizes the unlikely romance between beautiful Belle and the hulking Beast, who turns out to be a prince turned monstrous by an evil spell.

Truth to tell, however, the most endearing elements of the story are the enchanted household objects that come anthropomorphically to life in the fable's fantasy universe.

It should be a delightful treat seeing all of these lovable objects skittering and leaping all over the stage on ice skates, especially since many of the ice skaters in the cast are champions.

This particular Disney on Ice show has a really big stage dominated by a great staircase that reconfigures itself in magical ways as the production unfolds.

We've enjoyed a number of Disney on Ice presentations at Araneta Coliseum in the past years, and are looking forward to this new holiday treat for children—of all ages!

Meanwhile, at the CCP Complex, the Yuletide presentation is the similarly magical "Glow," a musical show created by the ever inventive **Douglas Nierras.** What makes this production unique is its extensive use of "black theater" techniques.

The magical theater form originated in Czechoslovakia, but has since become popular in other countries as well, particularly when they're incorporated into productions for children.

We remember seeing black theater shows for kids in the United States, China and England, and all of the audiences there were captivated by their visual wonders.

Black theater makes use of black lights, objects painted in day-glo colors, and manipulators of those objects who are dressed in black. When the black lights are on, everything except the colored objects becomes invisible, so the objects appear to move on their own.

The technique also lends itself well to depicting giants, birds in flight, skeletons dancing, schools of fish swimming, planets orbiting around the sun—anything that requires fantasy effects that would otherwise be difficult to put off onstage.

'Kill Bill'

THE DRESS rehearsal for a wedding is taking place, and the pregnant bride is ecstatic. But her joy turns to grief when uninvited guests slaughter everyone.

The bride survives the attack but goes into a coma. When she comes to, the epic tale of her quest for vengeance unfolds. She is a gun for hire named Black Mamba, who works for Bill, her former lover. Bill has a stable of deadly assassins all named after poisonous serpents.

Black Mamba exacts vengeance on Bill, who ordered the massacre at her wedding's dress rehearsal. Her quest leads to his lethal henchmen—California Mountain Snake, Copperhead, and O-Ren Ishii, the lovely but deadly female boss of the Japanese Yakuza.

No wonder preview audiences have been hailing "Kill Bill" as one of 2003's most highly charged and edgiest crime capers. **Quentin Tarantino**'s latest film stars the lovely and talented **Uma Thurman** as Black Mamba and **David Carradine** as Bill. Showing next month!

Free CCP exhibits

THE CCP complex warmly welcomes families this Christmas season. Ongoing until Jan. 17, 2004 at the CCP Little Theater lobby and second floor hallway is "The Joy of Sport," an exhibit featuring prizewinners of photography contests organized for Unesco by the Asia-Pacific Cultural Center.

On view at the CCP Main Theater lobby are award-winning *parols* made from unconventional material like garlic, sugar cane, fish scales and crab shells, created by students of Bauan High School in Batangas.

At the third and fourth floor hallways is the traveling exhibition "Limbag," organized by the Philippine Association of Printmakers, featuring fine prints in various media by established and young artists.

And at the Main Gallery is the exhibit "Beyond the Surface: Japanese Style of Making Things" featuring works that explore the nature of appearances. Call 832-1125.

7-day marathon of holiday specials kicks off on AXN

SHOW TIME

AXN, Asia's heart of action + adventure, is presenting a seven-day special that started yesterday, from 12 noon to 8 p.m.

Today, holiday movie specials take the spotlight, with comic maestros Leslie Nielsen, Billy Crystal and Cary Elwes in "Kevin of the North," "City Slickers II: Legend of Curly's Gold" and "Robin Hood: Men in Tights," respectively.

Tomorrow, Dec. 27, the No. 1 drama series in the US, "CSI," blasts off in an eight-hour marathon. Starting at 12 noon, don't miss this collection of the best episodes from Season 2 and 3 as the Las Vegas Crime Scene Investigation team enters the world of snuff movies and seedy underground fetish clubs, among others, to find out where, how and why a murder is committed.

The world's biggest action superhero, Arnold Schwarzenegger, stars on Sunday, Dec. 28, in three of his blockbusters starting 12 noon. Catch Schwarzenegger as he takes on the mafia in "Raw Deal," wield celluloid magic in "Last Action Hero," and battle his worst enemy yet—his clone—in "The 6th Day."

On Dec. 29, it's Japanese animation madness to the hilt with the animé feature package.

From noon till 7:30 p.m., AXN presents the best of this year's animé features, including the critically-acclaimed "Metropolis" and "Darker Descendent." Enter the world of Motoko and gang in the "Magnificent World of El Hazard," and cheer on Hibiki and his friends as they battle robots in "Vandread."

Bloodthirsty bats, giant creepy crawlies, sharp teeth, slimy tentacles take viewers to an edge-of-the-seat ride with the creature-feature movie package on Dec. 30 from noon to 8 p.m. Let your worst nightmare of hungry, angry predators come to life in "Bats," "Spiders II," "Crocodile II: Death Row" and "Octopus II."

Finally, it's the Best of "CSI: Miami" on Dec. 31 starting at noon. From the same people behind the most successful prime time drama, "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "CSI: Miami" packs more baffling cases set in the sunny beaches and cultural hotpot of Miami. Take a closer look at the death of a man with no apparent signs of trauma, and a family found brutally slaughtered, with no evidence of an intruder.

It's non-stop, fast-paced entertainment on AXN's Seven Days of Specials, only on AXN, Asia's heart of action + adventure.

Disney shows 'Lilo & Stitch'

DISNEY Channel presents "Lilo and Stitch" tomorrow, Dec. 27, at 7:30 p.m., the first time the acclaimed animated film will be shown on Asian television following its box-office success two years ago.

The film follows Lilo's close encounter with Stitch, an out-of-control genetic experiment who escaped from another planet and crash-landed on Earth. Posing as a small, strange-looking dog, Stitch, the galaxy's most impish alien, is adopted by Lilo, an orphan who wants nothing more than *ohana* (the Hawaiian word and concept for family).

Adding a unique and entertaining element to "Lilo and Stitch" are Elvis Presley's biggest hits like "Burning Love," "Can't Help Falling in Love With You," "Heartbreak Hotel," "Stuck on You," "Blue Hawaii," "Suspicious Minds," "Devil in Disguise" and "Hound Dog," plus new songs by Academy Award nominee Alan Silvestri.

Also key to the emotional appeal and charm of "Lilo and Stitch" is a first-rate vocal cast which includes Daveigh Chase as Lilo, Tia Carrere as Nani, Ving Rhames as Cobra Bubbles, David Ogden Stiers as Jumba Jookiba, Kevin McDonald as Pleakley, Jason Scott Lee as David Kawena and Zoe Caldwell as the Grand Councilwoman.

Changes at IBC-13

WITH the New Year comes changes at IBC-13.

The new station ID has a "less is more" approach, the new logo design of a much simpler square with red square for sports, blue for news and public affairs, and green for entertainment. It complements the network's new identity of a more dynamic, irreverent, honest and straightforward programming.

IBC 13 relaunched three of its news and public affairs shows, "Express Balita," "IBC News Tonite" and "Entrepinoy."

Aired Monday to Friday, 4:30 p.m., with Precious Hipolito-Castelo, the new "Express Balita" now has a new set, computer graphics, and segments. But it remains fast-paced, in-depth, straightforward, unbiased and varied. "IBC News Tonite," Monday to Friday, 10:30 p.m., rounds up the various events for the day with an actual account of all the details. "Entrepinoy," Tuesdays, 9 p.m., introduces new segments to the popular business-oriented show geared towards laymen.

A new host has joined "Celebrity-DATCom," Thursdays, 9:30 p.m.—sexy comedienne Maureen Larrazabal.

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★ At Ayala Cinemas ★
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Stargazing at Glorieta 1 Cinemas
featuring Rica Peralejo of
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Hear MAEGAN AGUILAR sing the theme song of Malikmata! Plus win exciting prizes!
DECEMBER 26 (Friday) 3:00 PM
GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY
MALIKMATA OPENS DECEMBER 25
AT AYALA CINEMAS
Distributed by OctoArts Films
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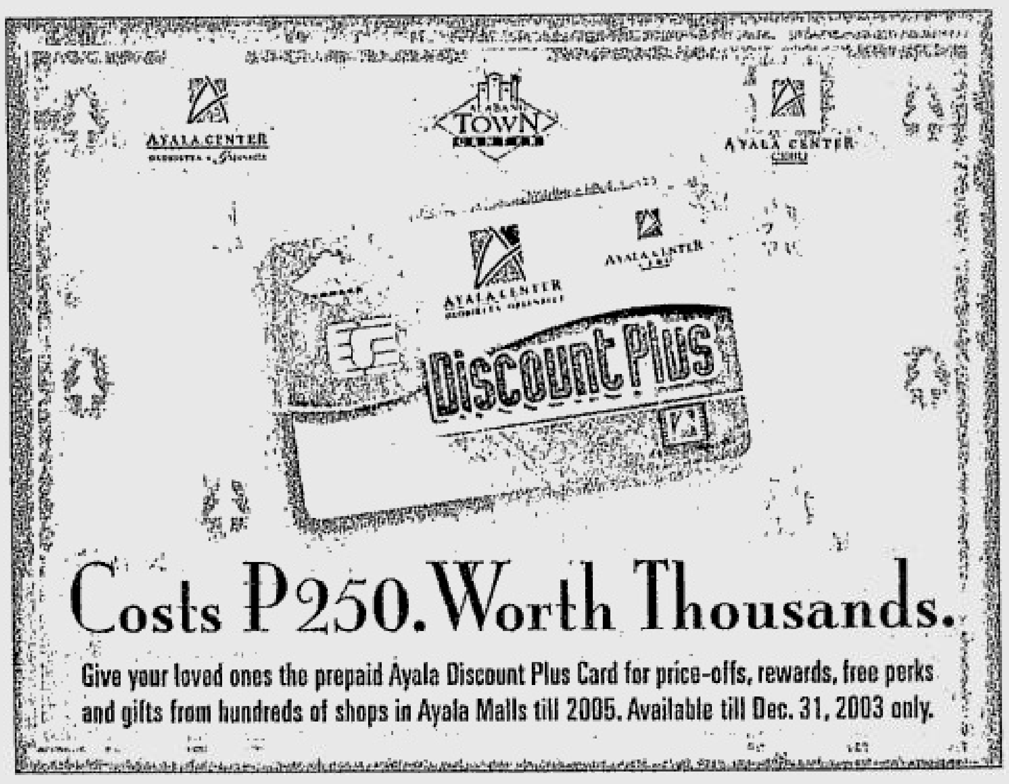
Stargazing at Glorieta 1 Cinemas
featuring the cast of
FANTASTIC MAN
VIC SOTTO FANTASTIC MAN
DOLBY



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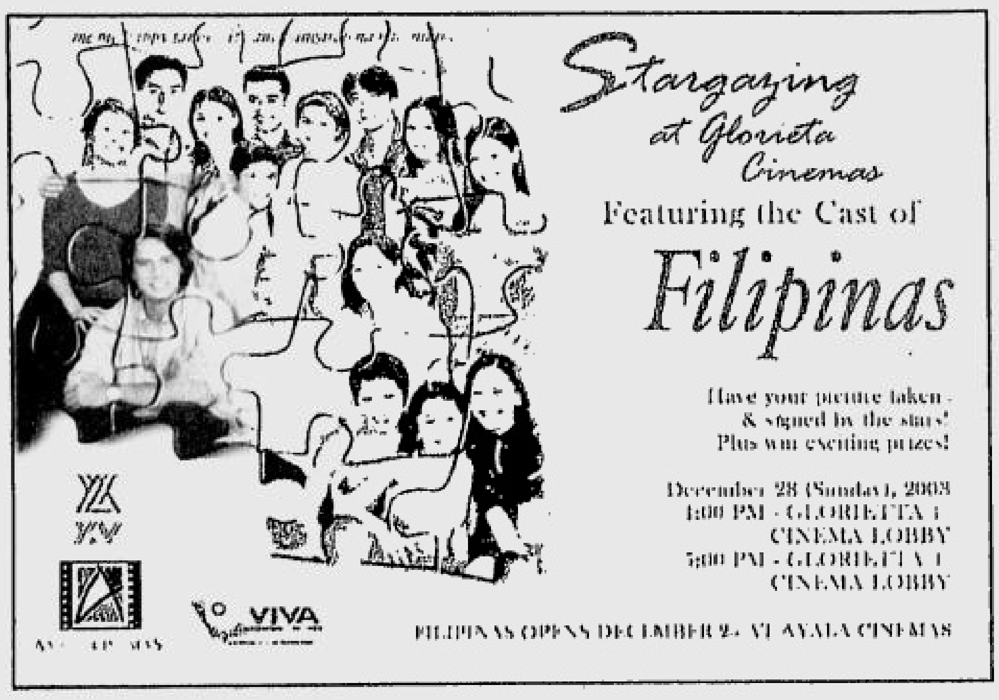

Stargazing at Glorieta Cinemas
Featuring the Cast of
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Have your picture taken & signed by the stars! Plus win exciting prizes!
December 28 (Sunday), 2003
4:00 PM - GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY
5:00 PM - GLORIETTA 4 CINEMA LOBBY
FILIPINAS OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS
VIVA

Stargazing at Ayala Cinemas
Meet & Greet
The Mythical Stars of
CAPTAIN BARBELL
Have your picture taken with the magical cast of Captain Barbell! Plus win exciting prizes!
December 27 (Saturday), 2003
4:00 PM - GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY
5:00 PM - GLORIETTA 4 CINEMA LOBBY
7:00 PM - GREENBELT 3 CINEMA LOBBY
December 28 (Sunday), 2003
1:00PM - ALABANG TOWN CENTER CINEMA LOBBY
CAPTAIN BARBELL OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS
AYALA CINEMAS
VIVA

From Top of the World to middle of the road

By Marinel R. Cruz

CLAIRE de la Fuente, who became famous as a singer, now says she is not too excited about singing anymore.

Her passion now is to do whatever she can to help the transport sector as president of the Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association (Imboa). While she used to lord it over the air waves and was widely known as a singer, now she often figures in news as the leader of bus operators.

"I was given the privilege to make a difference and I p.an to make the most out of it," Claire tells INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview on board her car while she is traveling from Pasay to Makati.

Claire—real name, Clarita Lim—is on her third year as Imboa president. As operator of the Philippine Corinthian Liner, Claire joined the association in 1994 and became its public relations officer in 1998. She assumed the post of vice president the following year.

According to her, Imboa lobbies for the rights of bus operators and coordinates with the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) on the proper implementation of traffic rules and regulations.

TRANSPORT is her passion now, says De la Fuente

"Of course I want to sing," says Claire, who in the late '70s was known as the Filipino counterpart of the late American singer Karen Carpenter.

"But I don't miss it anymore," she adds. "Let the new singers do it. I feel like I don't have to prove anything anymore."

Claire, with her cool, calming voice, popularized, among many others, the bittersweet songs "Sayang," "Minsan-minsan" and "Nakaw na Pag-ibig." She started singing at 7 but only discovered that she sang like Karen when she was 14.

"I remember buying Karen's album at the only record store in Caloocan, where I grew up," she says. "I used to sing her 'Top of the World' over and over."

Contest winner

While studying commerce at the University of the East, she won a singing contest, where award-winning composer George Canseco was one of the judges. Canseco helped her close a deal for two record singles and a television commercial.

She sang with the likes of Imelda Papin, Didith Reyes, Eva Eugenio, Sampaguita and Jackie Magno. Every weekend, she would fill up Manila's most popular nightspots, like Eduardo's, Wells Fargo and Impyerno Super Club along Roxas Boulevard.

"It was the favorite place of Manila's who's who," Claire recalls of the strip. "Only high-caliber singers performed at these places."

A weekly bar show and a major concert every month was enough for a singer to live prosperously then. "Now, you have to be a mainstay of a television program or to sing in corporate shows to earn enough for your family," she points out.

But with discipline and innovation, any talented singer can still pull it off, she says. "You only have to be different to be able to leave a mark. Madonna, Paula Abdul and Cindy Lauper were not really good singers. But they were different."

YESTERDAY

"KAREN CARPENTER of the Philippines" in the '70s

Claire quit singing at 19 and got married, but soon separated from her husband. She has two sons, Gigo, 17, and Mickey, 12.

"I lay low from show business because all I wanted was to save for my kids' future," she says. "I didn't want to end up with nothing."

Ups and downs

She decided to get involved in the retail business in 1980. She put up her own boutique and parlor and even ventured into manufacturing.

"I've had ups and downs," she says. "I was not successful all the way. It was really a hard climb, though I don't really see myself as someone who's on top."

Claire says she is very satisfied and is living the life she has always wanted.

"My friends say I'm more popular now than I was before," she said. "Many people look up to me. How much do politicians spend just to be popular? With me, it's effortless."

Claire says that before she became president of Imboa, nobody cared about the transport business. "Now it's *uso* to talk about transportation," she claims.

"Reporters ask for my comments, people like you call me up for appointments," Claire says. "Before, there was no face for the transport sector. Now, many are starting to pay attention."

PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT. As head of Imboa, De la Fuente (front row, second from right) pledges support for President Macapagal-Arroyo beside her in Malacañang, together with other bus operators

Korean tenor sings in QC

KOREAN tenor Greg Yoon will perform at the Crossroads 77 Convenarium (Scout Reyes corner Mother Ignacia, Quezon City) on Saturday, Dec. 27, at 7 p.m.

Backed by the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Rodel Colmenares, Yoon will sing Italian masterpieces by Verdi, Puccini, Falvo, Cardillo and Tosti, among others. The Ethereal Band will be the front act.

YOON

Yoon graduated in music from Kei Myung University. He studied the bel canto, which emphasizes rich vocal expression. He also earned the distinction of being an Asian dramatic spinto tenor, which is rare among Asian singers. Spinto (Italian for "immoderate, driven, pushed, excessive") means Yoon can reach the upper and lower registers with more velocity and volume, enabling him to charm his audience without a microphone—even when he's backed by a 60-piece orchestra.

He has chalked up more than 150 performances in various venues, including the Bolshoi Hall in Russia, Italia Milano in Italy, Chapman University in the US, with the International Music Group in Beijing and in the Shanghai Music Hall.

Yoon was chosen to be one of the "Global Three Tenors" with Giacomini from Italy and Piavko from Russia for the 2003 Daegu Universiade and the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

He has released one album, "Greg Yoon with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra."

Despite his accolades, the Korean tenor has yet to fulfill his ultimate dream: to sing like his idol, the late tenor Mario del Monaco.

Greg Yoon's Crossroad 77 concert will be for the benefit of the Turning Point Foundation, a rehabilitation home for drug and alcohol dependents. For ticket inquiries, call 374-4822 or 372-5407.

The making of . . .

From page A24

"*Umuulan-ulan pa. 'Tapos, pinagtabuyan kami ng* crowd control.

"*Kaya ngayon, 'yung mga* crowd control *namin sa* shooting, *sinasabihan ko, 'Huwag kayong masyadong maghigpit sa nanonood. Hindi niyo alam kung gaano kaligaya ang mga 'yan. Eh ako, naranasan ko talaga. Ako talaga 'yung masang-masa, 'yung baduy.*

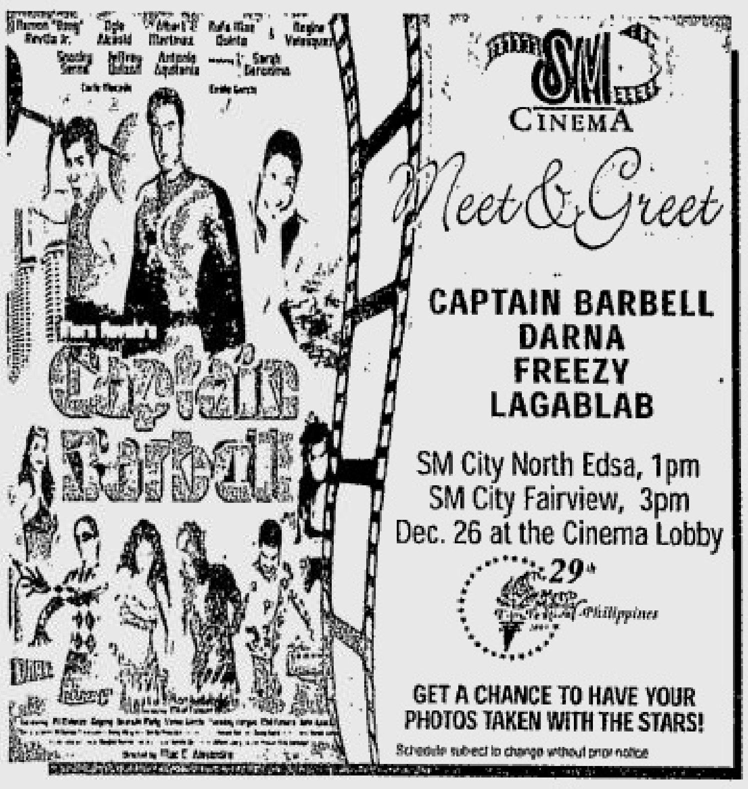
"I pride myself with the fact *na masa ako. Alam ko 'yung kiliti nila.*"

Direk Jerry cites the demands of his film and TV work: "*Pareho siyang napakahirap. Pareho ring* fulfilling. *Pero* personally, *parang mas* artistically fulfilling *ang pelikula, kasi puwede mong panoorin at i*-replay, generations from now. *Pero 'yung* TV show, once *na mag*-end, *hindi mo na mahahanap 'yung* copy. *Sa pelikula, parang may iniiwanan kang* good—or bad—legacy."

His recent win has also paved the way for movie offers. He'll attend to whatever Star Cinema gives him, but also wants to pursue his dream projects eventually.

"*Gusto kong gumawa ng* mainstream gay movie. *Kasi sa* culture natin, *parang hindi tanggap na ang bakla at bakla ay nagkakarelasyon. Akala nila kapag dalawang lalaki, lalaki ang isa at kinakwartahan o inaabuso 'yung isa.*"

He also wants to do an independent short film, with subject matter that he wants to keep hush-hush for now: "Early next year, *sana magawa ko siya.* I want to break all the rules."



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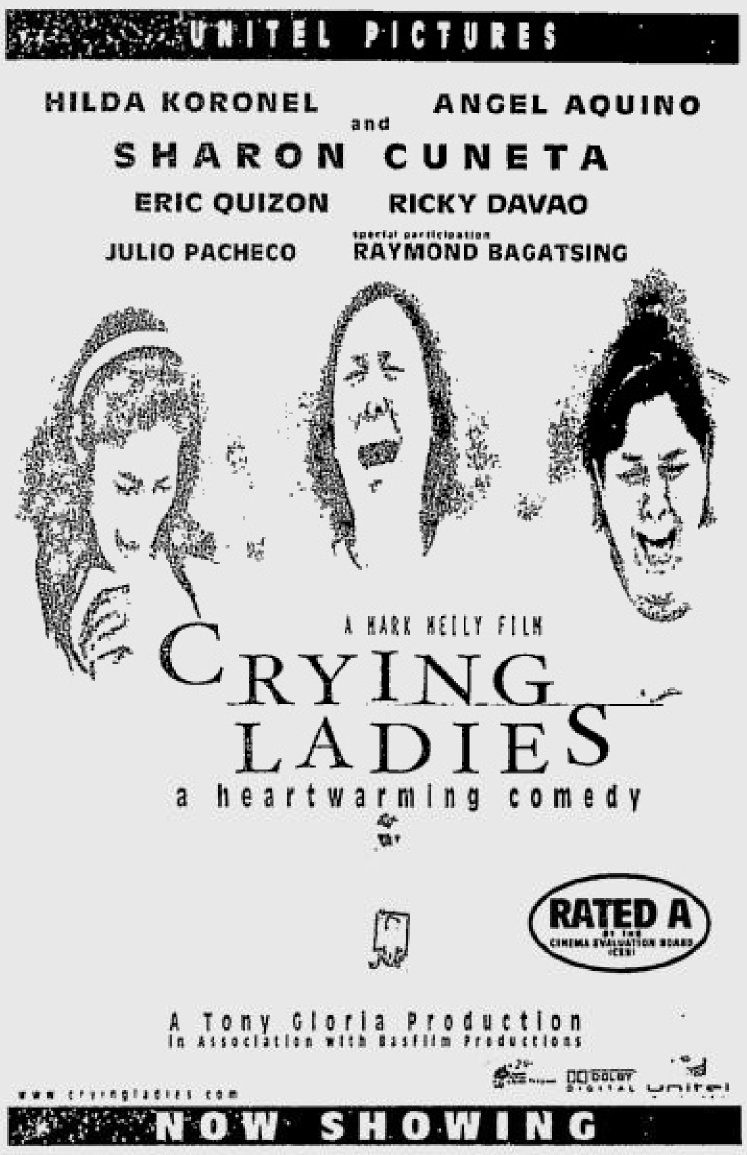

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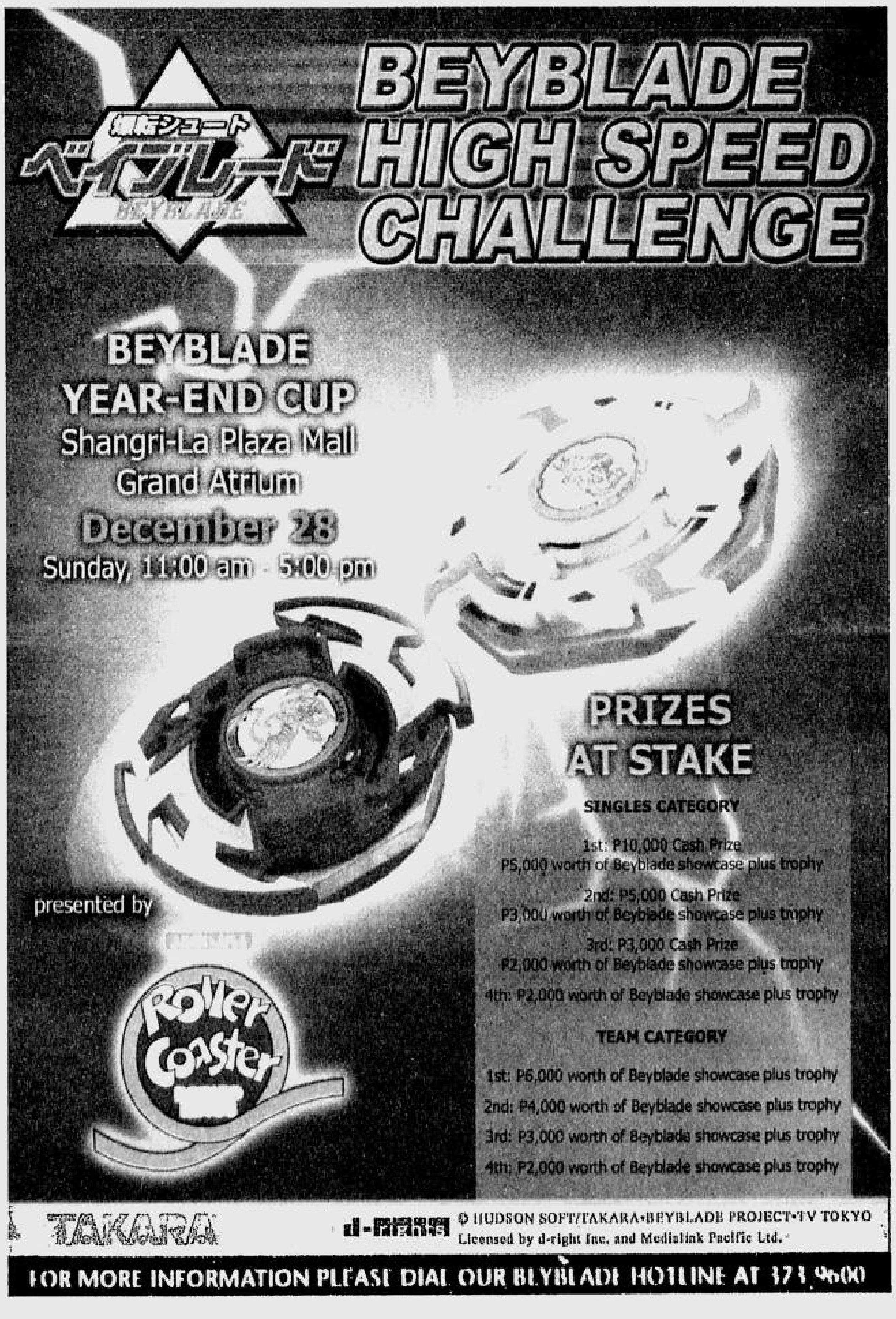

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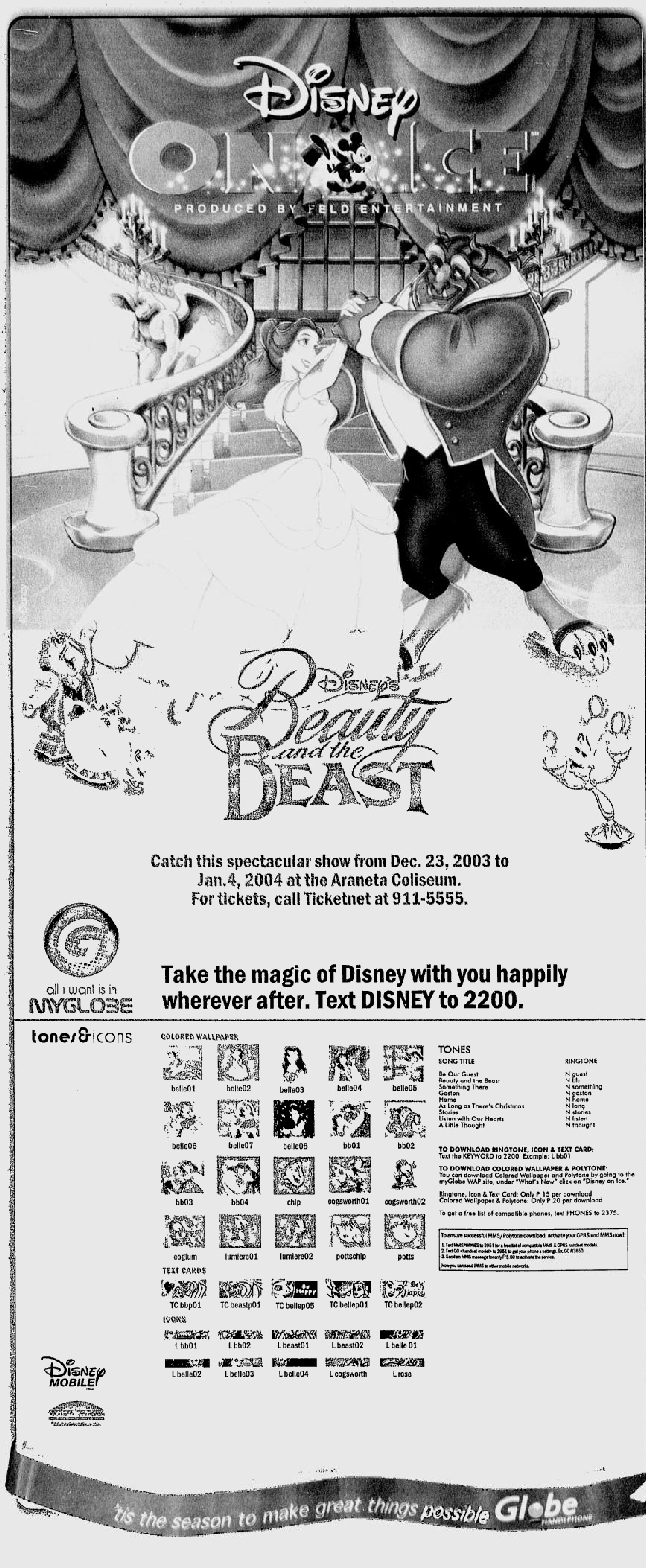

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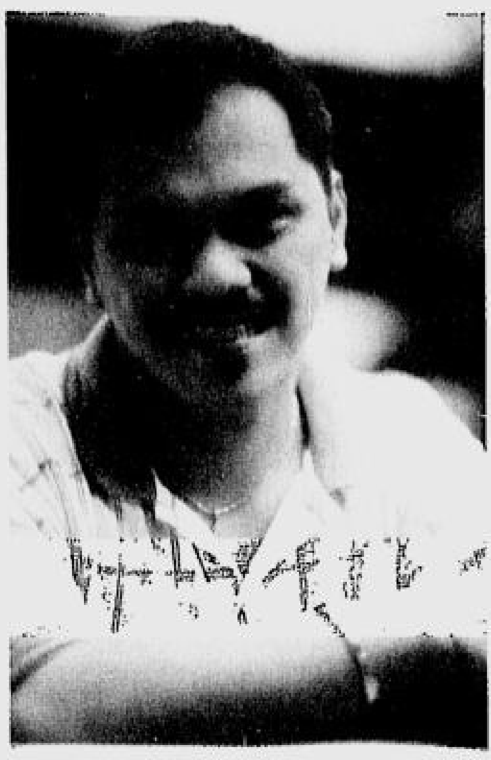

"I WANT to break all the rules," says Sineneng.

The making of one of Asia's best

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit, *Contributor*

SOFT-SPOKEN film and television director Jerry Lopez-Sineneng is a puzzle that unravels gradually.

Direk Jerry initially only gave the slightest hint at how delighted he was to win in the Best Direction-Long Form category in the Asian Television Awards, held last Dec. 4 at the University of Singapore's Cultural Center. He won for the "Maalaala Mo Kaya" episode "Helmet," which starred Eula Valdez as a woman afflicted with cerebral palsy. Shown in October 2002, the episode beat entries from Singapore, Taiwan, and China.

At the awarding ceremony, the modest director was all by his lonesome, wishing that at least one fellow Filipino had accompanied him.

"*Wala akong makahawak-kamay,*" he recalls. "*Mula noong nanalo ako, kinausap na ako ng mga katabi kong* Thai. *Noong una, wala talagang pumapansin sa akin, basang sisiw ang* description *ko sa sarili ko.*"

For the second year in a row, Direk Jerry has also been tapped to be one of the judges from all over the region, to preside over another category of the Asian Television Awards. The various works from different cultures impressed him.

"*Nag*-judge *ako sa* best cinematography. *Napanood ko 'yung* 'Crystal Boys', adaptation *siya ng* book, *ang ganda-ganda,*" he enthuses, referring to the novel by Hsien-Yung Pai, about gay life in 1970s Taiwan.

Direk Jerry, who has directed movies like "Videoke King," "Soltera", "Mara Clara the Movie," and the hit soap "Pangako sa 'Yo," has been catching his breath since winning the award, busy directing episodes of "Maalaala" as well as the hit teleserye "Basta't Kasama Kita," which he has handled since it began last year.

Among his biggest influences are his mentor Peque Gallaga, and foreign filmmakers Francis Ford Coppola and Pedro Almodovar. He admits that some of the films that have inspired him were popular ones: "Actually, *ang mga* favorite movies *ko, mga ka-simplehan.* 'Somewhere in Time', 'E.T.', at 'The Exorcist', *paborito ko*, all-time. Bruce Lee fan *din ako.*"

The self-proclaimed mama's boy is the youngest in a brood of five, exposed to films since he was a child in an encouraging household. "*Ang* influence *ko talaga siguro sa* movies are my film buff parents. *Magmula noong bata pa ako*, they would talk about movies.

"I would lock myself up in my room, *manonood ako ng* horror movie *mag-isa. Bubutasan ko 'yung kumot na ganyan,*" he says, gesturing a tearing motion with a hand. "Five years old *pa lang ako noon. Hindi ko alam kung bakit* horror *talaga ang una kong nagustuhan. Manonood ako, sigaw ako nang sigaw, 'tapos papasok ang nanay ko, 'Ano ka ba, alas tres na ng madaling araw!*'"

His fascination blossomed into curiosity, as he would try to figure out how Linda Blair's head would spin in "The Exorcist," as well as how the secrets of movie magic in general were created. "*Naramdaman ko na lang na sana maging direktor ako pagdating ng araw. Gusto kong sumigaw ng* 'action!'"

Direk Jerry started out with a job in the wardrobe department during the mid-'80s and was almost immediately promoted to production designer. He spent two years with Fernando Poe Jr.'s outfit, then trained under Gallaga and assisted in projects that include the second to fourth parts of the "Shake, Rattle and Roll" series of horror movies.

He reminisces about his days as a diehard fan of local *artistas* while growing up in Bulacan. "*Natikman ko talaga 'yung mamangka* for 45 minutes *para makapunta sa shooting ni* Alma Moreno *sa* Bulacan," he says, laughing.

THE MAKING/ A23

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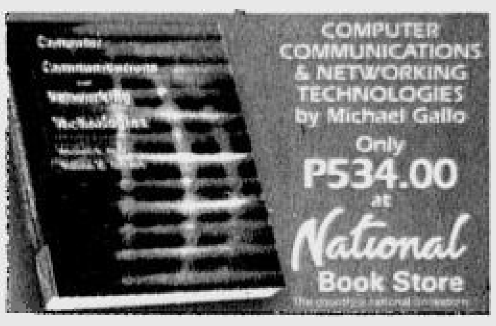

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Laguna de Bay rehab gets $5-M WB loan

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE WORLD Bank has approved a $5-million loan to help the Philippines rehabilitate the Laguna de Bay watershed through environmental intervention and institutional strengthening.

The loan will be accompanied by a $2.2-million grant from the Government of Netherlands and a counterpart funding of $2.8 million from the Laguna Lake Development Authority.

"This project is a continuation of the World Bank's support to the Philippines to improve its environmental quality. The protection and enhancement of the Laguna de Bay watershed will benefit its users both in the short and long term," the bank's acting country director for the Philippines, Teresa Ho, said in a statement.

"With improved planning and management, fisheries and tourism in the lake will improve, resulting in bigger income for the community. Health will likewise improve with the reduction of water-borne diseases and if the lake can be tapped as a domestic water supply source, surrounding communities can benefit from the lake's improvement as well," Ho added.

The newly approved project, called the Laguna de Bay Institutional Strengthening and Community Participation Project, will support these specific activities:

- Financing investments by LGUs to improve solid and wastewater management, control soil erosion through reforestation and expand opportunities for eco-tourism;
- Expanding incentives for enterprises and local governments to improve their environmental performance to be compliant with water quality standards;
- Providing increased opportunities for community groups to participate in planning and implementing environmental solutions, and
- Supporting stakeholders to develop integrated plans at the microwatershed level.

The project has two components. The first component will support demand-driven sub-projects designed to improve the environmental quality of the watershed—addressing waste management and sanitation, natural resources management, soil erosion and localized flood prevention as well as eco-tourism.

The second component seeks to strengthen the LLDA, build the capacity of stakeholders in the micro watersheds, provide project coordination support as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The loan will be in US dollars and will be repaid in 20 years with an eight-year grace period at an indicative interest rate of 1.48 percent a year.

Gov't pushes franchise bid of Transco

By Doris C. Dumlao

PROCEEDS from the privatization of state utility National Power Corp. would fall by as much as $500 million if Congress would not be able to enact the 50-year franchise application of the National Transmission Corp. (Transco), Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri warned.

Transco is the entity that will take over the transmission assets of Napocor that will be privatized.

Neri said that without a proper franchise, the government could not raise the fair amount projected from the sale of Napocor's transmission lines.

"Our estimate is that with a proper Transco franchise bill, we can get back $2 billion for that but without it, we can only get about $1.5 billion," Neri said.

Any decision to shelve the Transco bill could thus have a significant economic impact, Neri warned.

"Half a billion dollars is already P26 billion, that's a lot of money we will forego just for one piece of legislation," Neri said.

He said the Executive Branch would need the cooperation of Congress, especially since delays in the privatization of Napocor assets would further weigh on the government's deficit.

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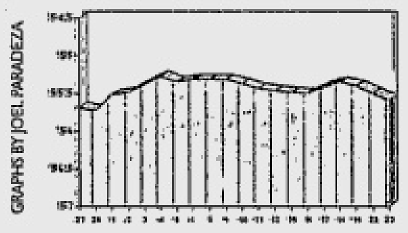

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STOCK MARKET

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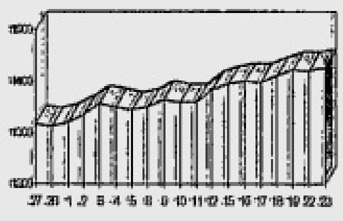


(See stock market report on Page B2)

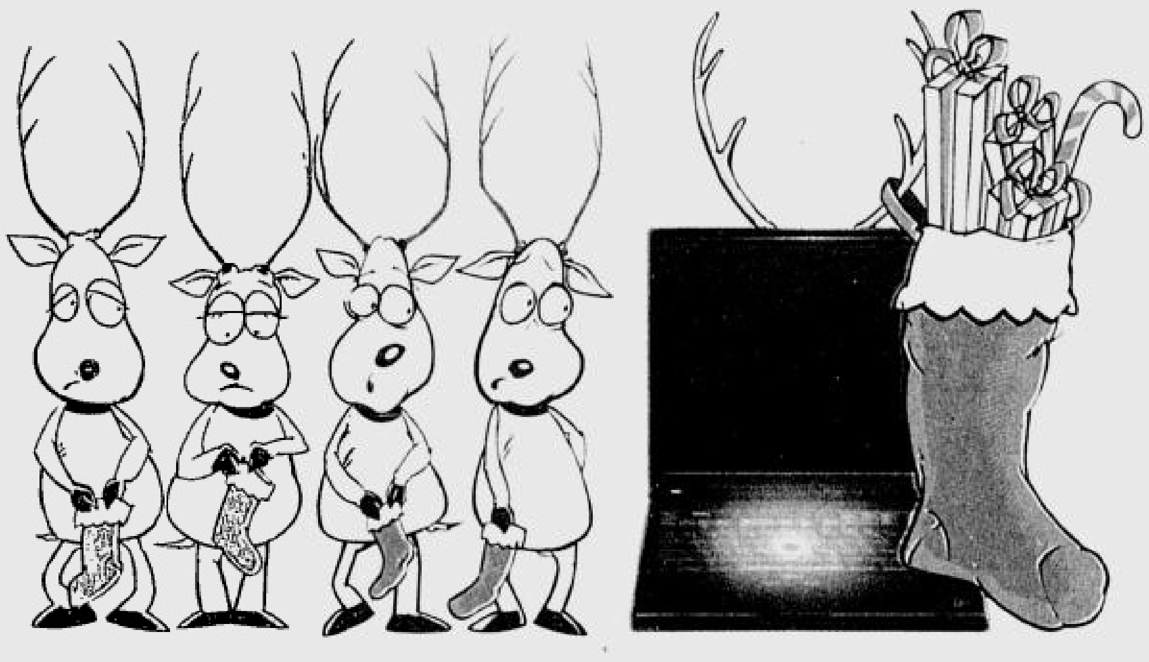
Stocks seen to rise

MODERATE window-dressing is expected to continue when stock trading resumes on Monday. The exchange had been closed since Dec. 24, an official holiday. The main stock index gained 6.37 points or 0.45 percent to 1,427.40 points on Dec. 23. The market is up 40.16 percent so far this year.

"We still expect some pockets of buying in the next sessions that might push the market to a year-to-date high of 1,435," said BPI Securities investment analyst Spencer Yap.

Stock analysts said the index might test the 1,430 range in the last two trading days of the year on Dec. 29 and 30 as players position ahead of the new year.

"Trading in the coming sessions would still be dictated by the mild seasonal window-dressing activities of fund managers and continued shifting of funds toward blue chips widely expected to post strong earnings performance in the coming quarters," said RCBC Securities stock analyst Edwin Gil Mendoza. *Reuters*



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Dollar reserves level seen to remain at more than $16B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE COUNTRY'S external reserves will stay above $16 billion by the end of the year despite the huge payments made by the government and the central bank on their maturing obligations this month, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

The level of the country's gross international reserves this year may match the $16.179 billion registered last year. As of end-November, the GIR stood at $16.801 billion.

"The GIR level reflects the government's prudent fiscal and debt management. It shows investors that we are not in a crisis since we have enough funds to pay our maturing obligations," said the BSP chief.

The GIR is being propped up by huge borrowings, particularly of the national government.

Consisting mainly of US dollars, the GIR is the total foreign currency holdings of the central bank including gold and special drawing rights, the currency used by the International Monetary Fund.

The current level of reserves is enough to pay for 4.7 months worth of imports and is equivalent to 2.8 times the level of the country's short-term debt based on original maturity.

Still, the Philippines' GIR level is among the lowest in Asia considering that Thailand has about three times more, South Korea has about $100 billion and Japan, about $200 billion. During the Asian crisis, the country's GIR dropped to single-digit levels.

The BSP said that with the higher-than-expected dollar reserves this year, the balance-of-payments deficit should reach only $446 million, against the forecast of $1.15 billion.

A strong GIR should support the continued recovery of the peso.

Buenaventura said the market's concerns that the country was in a fiscal crisis had weakened the peso.

"Next year, we'd like to keep the reserves at $15 billion or above because confidence goes down when the GIR drops below this year's level. We are already considering a borrowing mix that will secure 70 percent of the government's huge requirement from the local market," added Buenaventura.

The GIR rose to its highest level at $16.887 billion in October given the proceeds from the national government's $1.05-billion bond float and the BSP's $500-million loan.

The national government had pre-funded $1.05 billion of its $1.8-billion financing requirement in 2004 while the BSP used $115 million of the loan proceeds to pay obligations that fell due in October.

The BSP said that the net international reserves stood at $13.684 billion from $13.564 billion in October. The level of net reserves is computed by deducting short-term liabilities and IMF loans from the GIR.

In computing the country's reserves, the IMF, however, subtracts some $2 billion in funds used by the country as collateral backing its borrowings.

Gov't vows to continue disciplined spending

THE MACAPAGAL administration said it would settle as much as P60 billion in accounts payable next year to bring down the level of government obligations to a more manageable level.

However, the government said it would see to it that such a move would not put pressure on country's fiscal position.

The government is hoping that the settlement of these obligations will pump prime the economy and help it achieve stronger growth next year, according to the economic team.

Budget Undersecretary Laura Pascua said the government would not engage in any front loading activities and would instead settle some P112.2 billion in outstanding obligations by carefully managing revenue and controlling disbursements.

Pascua said the government paid only P38 billion in accounts payable in 2003, reducing the outstanding payables despite the booking of P18.7 billion in new obligations this year.

At the start of the year, the level of accounts payable stood at P131.5 billion or P20 billion lower than the P151.6 billion in early 2002. When the Macapagal administration took over in 2001, the payables stood at P178.4 billion and gradually settled at P59 billion that same year.

Last year, the government front loaded the settlement of P53.1 billion in accounts payable and ended up regretting the strategy as revenue collection faltered while spending grew.

Pascua said that this year, the government changed tack and settled obligations when revenue collection was coming in strongly.

In fact, in the second quarter, the government ignored its outstanding billings and paid only the salaries of state workers. Most obligations got paid in the third quarter which led to higher-than-programmed expenditures and also higher monthly deficits.

"We will not do any front loading. We will continue to adhere to fiscal discipline next year," assured Pascua.

As part of prudent cash management, the government would like to trim down its payables over time to avoid costly interest payments.

Others included in accounts payable, aside from contractors' billings, are salaries, compensation and other benefits of employees not paid in the previous year but was already approved.

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Bond Fund - Peso	1.11505	1.11634
Managed Fund - Peso	1.15708	1.15294
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IT firm embarking on property dev't

By Doris C. Dumlao

IMPERIAL Resources Inc., a mining and oil exploration firm that shifted to the information technology business, is embarking on a property development venture in Bacoor, Cavite.

Imperial corporate secretary Vicente Acsay told the Philippine Stock Exchange that the company had forged a joint venture deal with AJ Mark Realty and Development Corp., which is based in Greenhills, San Juan.

The agreement covers the development of a property recently acquired from Imperial Development Corp., with a total area of 34,467 square meters, less the 10,828 square meters that the Department of Public Works and Highways intends to use for a road construction project.

The property will be developed into a residential and commercial subdivision.

The agreement contains provisions on development works, surveying works, expenses for development works, subdivision and housing project sharing, assignment of lots, conveyance of titles, assignment and allocation of lots, among others.

Imperial shifted its primary business from the mining of base metals and oil exploration to IT. It engaged in IT education and incorporated Philippine Cyber College Corp.

The company also entered into an agreement earlier to acquire IT firm Weblink through a stock swap.

Imperial has total assets of P110.05 million as of end-September this year.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 23, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17.25	17	17.25	25,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46.5	46	46.5	334,600
China Banking Corp.	675	675	675	675	380
Citystate Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	34	34	34	34	98,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	1,430,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	27	27	26.5	26.5	113,100
Philippine National Bank	24.25	24.25	24	24.25	42,500
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	5,000
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	5,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	25	27	25	27	600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.3	2.3	50,000
First Abacus Financial	0.44	0.5	0.44	0.5	320,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	170	170	170	170	250
Manulife Financial Corp.	1740	1750	1735	1750	1,590
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.34	431,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	210	210	210	210	11,200
Sun Life Financial Inc	1305	1320	1305	1320	880
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	38,700
Diversified Fin. Network	2	2	2	2	5,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.69	0.7	0.69	0.7	3,650,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	845	845	845	845	26,090
Ipeople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.98	540,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.04	0.039	0.04	2,500,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	0.9	0.91	0.89	0.9	5,180,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	950	950	930	935	39,970
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	51,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	66,000
Manila Electric Co. B	24	24.25	24	24.25	228,300
Petron Corp.	2.24	2.36	2.24	2.32	10,265,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	50,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	209,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	125,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	310,000
Union Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	11,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	32	32	32	32	9,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17.5	18.25	17.5	18.25	634,700
San Miguel Corp. A	53.5	54	53.5	54	43,400
San Miguel Corp. B	63	63.5	63	63.5	83,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	10,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
Ayala Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	5,210,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	9,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc	0.023	0.025	0.023	0.025	4,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.84	0.86	0.84	0.86	3,510,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	3,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	30,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	180,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.175	0.18	290,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	100,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	7,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	164,600
Ionics Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	2,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	3,601,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	100,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	10,290,000
Music Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	250,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	90,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37	50,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.88	1	0.88	1	40,000
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	6.9	7.2	6.9	7	15,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	2,000,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	26	26	26	26	1,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	323,800
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	1,530,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	20,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	2,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	25	25	25	25	563,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7	7.1	7	7	11,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.1	6	6	6,888,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	500,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.22	1,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,000,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.04	1.04	9,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	2,554,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	1,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	8,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,150,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	200,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	30,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	10,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	400,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc.	2,878,100	31,793,095.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	112,538,160	180,957,125.00
PRO	12,251,000	59,301,610.00
Mining	12,430,000	1,371,250.00
OIL	40,400,000	192,000.00
GRAND TOTALS:	180,497,260	273,615,080.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc.	436.85	UP 5.48
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,157.00	UP 6.72
PRO	568.53	UP 2.79
Mining	1,589.00	DOWN 9.37
OIL	1.26	UP 0.05
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	861.49	UP 9.99
Composite	1,427.40	UP 6.37

CURRENCIES

December 25, 2003 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.806517	1.000000	55.464000
Japan	Yen	0.007502	0.009302	0.515900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.422534	1.763800	97.827400
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103892	0.128816	7.144700
Switzerland	Franc	0.641263	0.795102	44.099500
Canada	Dollar	0.606221	0.751654	41.689700
Singapore	Dollar	0.472006	0.585240	32.459800
Australia	Dollar	0.591808	0.733783	40.698500
Bahrain	Dinar	2.139302	2.652520	147.119400
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.215054	0.266645	14.789200
Brunei	Dollar	0.470629	0.583533	32.365100
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006500
Thailand	Baht	0.020377	0.025265	1.401300
UAE	Dirham	0.219610	0.272294	15.102500
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.239900	68.769800
Argentina	Peso	0.272472	0.337838	18.737800
Brazil	Real	0.275826	0.341997	18.968500
Denmark	Kroner	0.134386	0.166625	9.241700
India	Rupee	0.017753	0.022012	1.220900
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212270	0.263193	14.597700
Mexico	New Peso	0.071392	0.088519	4.909600
New Zealand	Dollar	0.517130	0.641190	35.563000
Norway	Kroner	0.119772	0.148505	8.236700
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014112	0.017498	0.970500
South Africa	Rand	0.116910	0.144957	8.039900
Korea	Won	0.000676	0.000838	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.110052	0.136454	7.568300
Syria	Pound	0.018226	0.022599	1.253400
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023756	0.029455	1.633700
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000506	0.000627	0.034800

Napocor to award P37-M project to lone bidder

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE LONE bidder for a P37-million contract to put up a 1-MW diesel plant in Aurora province is expected to bag the deal even as it undergoes post-qualification with National Power Corp.'s contracts award committee.

In an interview, a Napocor official said Bendimil Construction and Development Corp. was the only company that submitted an offer until the deadline last Dec. 16.

The official said the P37.7-million contract was for the site development as well as installation and commissioning of a 1-megawatt diesel-fired power plant in Casiguran, Aurora.

The new power plant would be an addition to the existing 1.188-MW diesel-run facility in the same town.

The contract required the winning bidder to put up the new facility within 180 days.

The winning bidder will be responsible for site development, installation of two 500-kilowatt generator sets and the construction of related plant equipment and installations including intra-site road networks.

In a related development, the government of the Czech Republic and the Philippine National Bank had earmarked a total of P47 million in financing for a 750-kilowatt mini-hydro power facility that would be built in San Luis town, also in Aurora province.

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LGUs' construction projects up 5.6%

LOCAL government units in the country reported a 5.6-percent rise in the number of construction projects undertaken in 2002 to 77,620 from a year ago, of which about 88.4 percent was completed, based on a recently completed annual survey.

Citing the results of its annual survey on LGU construction projects, the National Statistics Office said total expenditures for completed projects amounted to P20.2 billion last year, or 6.1 percent higher than the P19.1 billion spent in 2001.

Disbursements for unfinished projects reached P8 billion, dropping by 15.5 percent from last year's P9.5 billion.

Total expenditure for completed new construction projects amounted to P15.8 billion while expenditure for additions, alterations and repairs stood at P4.4 billion.

The survey also showed that LGUs focused more on infrastructure and spent less for construction of health care facilities.

Other public constructions consisting of drainage canals, riprap walls, irrigation canals, playgrounds and recreation facilities ranked first in terms of number of LGU construction projects. This numbered to 18,754 projects, or 24.3 percent of the total.

Construction of roads and bridges followed closely with 16,758 projects, representing a share of 21.6 percent.

Hospitals and other health care facilities accounted for the least number of construction projects. Only 1,935 (2.3 percent) hospitals and other health buildings were reported by LGUs as construction projects.

About 77.6 percent (60,268 projects) of the total construction projects of LGUs were undertaken by municipal government units. Provincial and city government units reported 10,816 (13.9 percent) projects and 6,536 (8.4 percent) projects, respectively.

Of the total projects, 68,616 (88.4 percent) were completed in 2002 while the remaining 9,004 (11.6) were unfinished.

Across the country, six provinces were beneficiaries of the biggest number of projects for the construction of streets and bridges: Benguet (919 projects); Batangas (790 projects); Pangasinan (689 projects); Negros Occidental (649 projects); Davao del Sur (520 projects); and Bulacan (508 projects).

The NSO survey covered 80 provinces, 115 cities and 1,497 municipalities aggregating to a total of 1,692 LGUs. *Doris C. Dumlao*

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Business Features Editor **Margie Quimpo-Espino**

'SM' vs 'SM': 'Wagwag' shops close due to malls

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Baguio residents, who frequent Metro Manila, never escape the tag "SM shoppers." "SM," of course, stands for *segunda mano* (second hand or used).

The label stuck because of Mayor Bernardo Vergara's declaration in 2001 that the city has become the center of all "wagwag (bargain goods)" trade in the country.

The volume of fashionable Hong Kong apparel that ended up on display along the city's side streets have been fascinating tourists since 1999.

Business suits from Prada, the latest brand-name pumps and sneakers and stylish leather handbags from Nina Ricci, that were by Hong Kong standards only out-of-fashion by one year, have been finding their way to small Baguio retailers.

The traders purchased these from enterprising Hong Kong-based Filipinos, who bought them off Salvation Army offices overseas. The Baguio-based retailers sold these used clothes and accessories for as high as P400 and as low as P50.

But the city folk's "SM" tag may already be outdated. Retail giant Shoemart has forced the segunda mano business back to the underground economy as mall retailers hiked up the city's earnings by 30 percent from 2002 to 2003.

Nelly dela Serna, chief of the city's research and statistics division, said wagwag shops used to comprise a substantial volume of Baguio retailers between 2000 and 2001, after the media featured the success of this Baguio phenomenon.

Vergara's declaration influenced some 500 dealers of wagwag items to band together and set up shop along Session Road. Obtaining their first business licenses, the second-hand dealers converted former cinema houses and former banks into virtual wagwag strip malls.

However, the overall retail earnings in Baguio dropped from P78,435,025 in 2001 to P71,385,420 in 2002, suggesting that the used clothes business fared less as a mainstream industry here than when it was an underground trade, Dela Serna said.

Five malls

Five shopping malls now operate in downtown Baguio. Among these is the SM City Baguio, which opened in November. A sixth mall, Cooyesan Shopping Mall, is located at the far end of the city and has since been sold to a hotel chain.

Dela Serna said shopping malls generally upset any established retail network because it generates unusual business traffic. A mall fits inside a single establishment every possible type of business, making it attractive to consumers because of its "one-stop-shop" concept.

THE "WAGWAG" or "ukay-ukay" phenomenon altered consumer behavior in Baguio.

When the wagwag trade blossomed here, only the Baguio Center Mall had been operating at the heart of the summer capital.

The Baguio Center Mall coped with the unusual second hand phenomenon by setting hosting bazaars. Other malls such as Porta Vaga now operate a similar bazaar concept, although the wagwag stores managed to carve out a stable, if stagnant, marketing niche in order to survive them.

"Tourists from Pangasinan, La Union and even Metro Manila, still come up to shop for second hand, branded clothes," Dela Serna said.

But a dent in the wagwag's invulnerable hide became apparent with the opening of SM City Baguio. The city business licensing office noted a considerable plunge in business permit renewals of recognized wagwag shops.

Cristo Lagyop, chief of the city licensing division, said they have registered no more than 135 wagwag dealers, which was a far cry from last year's 255 traders.

Dela Serna said Shoemart has been offering products with "Manila price tags," which compete with the second hand industry.

Supply chain

What exposed wagwag shops' inherent frailty, however, was a break in their supply chain. Beverly Somera, a former wagwag distributor, told the INQUIRER in September that supplies from Hong Kong dwindled with the advent of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) scare and unexpected competition from new Filipino distributors who compete over the same Salvation Army discards.

Somera said she immediately divested her share in the distribution dealership when she realized that the number of Baguio traders have also tripled.

"The competition is killing us all, so I stopped," she said.

Dela Serna believes Shoemart opened in Baguio at a time when wagwag traders were unable to replenish their fashionable items.

"We also got word that the government had cut off the supplies of a major distributor, so sometimes, the dealers end up selling export overruns instead," Dela Serna said.

"For the discerning wagwag buyer, it was important to purchase a one-of-a-kind suit or dress. When the same outfit is displayed in every other store, no woman would buy it," she said.

Malls needed wagwag

Dela Serna said the mainstream wagwag stores have started to diminish on account of these problems. Some of the cinemas and buildings that were invaded by wagwag shops in 2001 have been replaced by grocery stores.

But shopping malls still have to thank wagwag outlets for their business in Baguio.

Dela Serna said the wagwag phenomenon altered consumer behavior in Baguio.

"Every Baguio old timer will tell you they do not subscribe to fads, so every time something new opens here, the resident would only spend a few months transacting there before they tire of the place," she said.

But the wagwag trade offered the city resident a chance to buy more for disposable income that used to purchase far less, Dela Serna said.

She said the increased consumer-spending trend in the city prevails.

The invasion of malls in Baguio drew P453 million in investments in 2002, which is a 59-percent increase from 2001 investments.

The highest investment growth was in real estate because many house owners here have chosen to open their houses to transients.

Dela Serna said these supported signs that Baguio has an increased migration volume, which the general retail market will target for the next 10 years.

"This means that both SMs (Shoemart and segunda mano) will continue to co-exist for decades, regardless of how much people actually earn here. You can be sure the government employee will still look for wagwag, and the executive will continue to visit Shoemart," she said.

Deadlines you should not miss in early 2004

By Luna Mae Fulache-Aguja
SGV & Co.

TAX-FILES

1. CREDITABLE, final withholding taxes and withholding tax on compensation for December 2003.

The deadline for filing of returns for creditable and final taxes withheld at source as well as for taxes withheld on compensation for the month of December has been moved earlier from Jan. 25 to Jan. 15 of the following year. With respect, however, to taxpayers who availed of the electronic filing and payment system (EFPS), December returns which are due for e-filing on Jan. 11-15 are still due on such dates. They shall no longer have an additional five-day grace period under the staggered filing (Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 02-2003). But since the staggered filing only speaks of e-filing, then payment of the tax due thereon shall still follow the deadline which gives an additional five days from due date, which in this case would be Jan. 20, 2004.

2. Annual information return of income tax withheld at source.

The annual information return of income taxes withheld on compensation and final withholding taxes (BIR Form No. 1604-CF) for taxable year 2003 must be filed on or before Jan. 31 of the following year. In addition to the manually prepared alphabetical list of employees and list of payees who are recipients of income payments subjected to final withholding taxes, the withholding agent may, at his option, submit 3.5 inch floppy diskettes, containing the said list.

However, it is mandatory for taxpayers who have at least 10 employees or income payees to submit the said lists in a 3.5 inch floppy diskettes, using the existing CSV data file format, together with the manually prepared alphabetical list. Only diskettes readable upon submission shall be considered as duly filed alphabetical list of employees/payees by the employer.

3. Withholding tax statement for taxes withheld

Revenue Regulations No. 2-98, as amended, provides that every payor required to deduct and withhold taxes shall furnish each payee, whether individual or corporate, with a withholding tax statement using BIR Form No. 2307. Such statement should show the income payments made and amount of taxes withheld therefrom. The same should be provided to the payee within 20 days following the close of the taxable quarter employed by the payee in filing his/its quarterly income tax return. For final withholding taxes, the statement should be given to the payee on or before Jan. 31 of the succeeding year. Upon request of the payee, however, the payor must furnish such certificate simultaneously with the income payment.

4. Certificate of compensation payment/tax withheld

Revenue Regulations No. 2-98, as amended by RR 3-02 and 19-02, also requires every employer or other person who is required to deduct and withhold the tax on compensation including fringe benefits given to rank and file employees, to furnish every employee from whose compensation taxes have been withheld the certificate of compensation payment/tax withheld using BIR Form No. 2316 on or before Jan. 31 of the succeeding calendar year.

BIR Form No. 2316 shall contain a certification to the effect that the employer's filing of BIR Form No. 1604-CF shall be considered as a substituted filing of the employee's income tax return to the extent that the amount of compensation and tax withheld appearing in BIR Form No. 1604-CF as filed with the BIR is consistent with the corresponding amounts indicated in BIR Form No. 2316. It shall be signed by both the employee and employer attesting to the fact that the information stated therein has been verified and is true and correct to the best of their knowledge. The employers are also required to retain copies of the duly signed BIR Form No. 2316 for a period of three years.

5. Registration of the bound computer-generated/loose-leaf books of accounts

Taxpayers who are using computer-generated and loose-leaf books of accounts and other accounting records, such as, but not limited to, receipts and invoices for taxable calendar year 2003 are required to register such bounded computer-generated/loose-leaf books of accounts and other accounting records on or before Jan. 15 of the following year.

6. Inventory lists

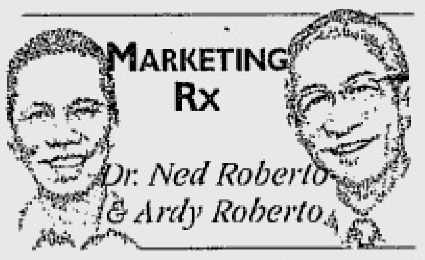
Taxpayers who employ the calendar year ending Dec. 31 as its accounting period are also required to submit its inventory list as of Dec. 31, 2003 on or before Jan. 30 of the following year.

7. Annual registration fee

All taxpayers are required to pay the annual registration fee except cooperatives, those earning purely compensation income and those earning marginal income on or before Jan. 31 of each year.

The above discussion is intended as a general guide to all our business financial guardians and keepers to ease the burden of deadlines this holiday season. After all, it is the season for everyone to enjoy.

Marketing in the age of discontent



Dr. Ned Roberto
& Ardy Roberto

Q: "I'M ANNOYED at bank (tele) marketers who call me and talk to me like a robot—even if I've been a long time customer. I actually cancelled my credit card because of that. You mentioned in a previous column how companies should explore going into relationship marketing and CRM—or customer relationship marketing. How does that really work? I can't imagine having a relationship with a product or a brand."—*email from an MRx reader*

A: Marketing has really become a hard job. Gone are the days when customers were more forgiving and easier to please. Now customers can easily switch, even if they are satisfied with your product or service, simply because they have a lot to choose from. When it comes to your relationships with the people who make or provide the products or services that you buy, it's not against the law to be promiscuous.

So what will keep your customers loyal to you? Sometimes marketers forget that consumers are people. As Shane Weaver, creative director of OgilvyOne in Hong Kong, says, "Many times we marketers see consumers as a target to hit, so we launch campaigns aimed at hitting them. …We battle to grab market share. It's very adversarial!" So from launching mass marketing campaigns, companies are now integrating one-to-one marketing that will give consumers a semblance of the personal touch. (Many times though companies stumble in implementing it. Just like the bank of the MRx reader above. The bank did not bother to supply the telemarketing team with a list of its current customers.)

But people do crave for personal contact because we were designed to be social and relational beings. God designed us to be incomplete without relationships—a relationship with Him, our family, our friends, and community. This Christmas season is a reminder for us of God sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to us so that we could have a relationship with Him.

Relationships give us a sense of well-being and, according to researchers, is even essential to our health. Our friends at J&J shared with us a study that shows that premature babies dying within something like 36-48 hours if they are not touched and caressed. We've learned that it's now SOP for nurses to touch and caress babies that are in the incubator every hour or so.

"You complete me"

Relationships drive us. In the movie, Jerry Maguire, Hollywood hunk, Tom Cruise, is reduced to a sentimental blob who pursues his former secretary, played by Renee Zelwegger, as the love of his life. Only God knows how many times Tom has been parroted after he said the immortal line, "you complete me."

People need family relations to live long. A research about the secrets of people who lived beyond 100, says that one of the common denominators among the centenerarians—aside from health diets—was that they had strong family relations. (Their children did not put them in nursing homes.)

Smart advertisers and marketers are aware of this relationship thing and use it for their marketing campaigns. The brands behind the most popular teams in the PBA—San Miguel Beer and Ginebra—both advertise and promote consumption of their products in a *barkada* or barangay environment. It's a picture of friends and neighbors raising glasses of alcohol together.

Marketers use and pay big bucks to celebrities to endorse their products because research (and results) show that these are the celebrities that people can relate to.

People crave for relationships. It's a basic need that marketers should recognize. So when executives ask their telemarketers to call you as if you were a stranger to their business, they're asking for trouble.

'Dreamketing'

A friend once shared that "advertising makes him want and buy stuff that he sometimes really doesn't need." In the past, professors used to define marketing as "the art and science of finding a need and filling it." Now it is defined as "art and science of finding a want and filling it." Management guru, Tom Peters, whose last Manila seminar was hosted by the junior MRx, preaches about the next level of marketing. He calls it "Dreamketing." It's all about marketing the dream, not the product; it's about building the brand around the main dream. Peters gives as an example the Dreamketing of Harley Davidson motorcycles:

"What we sell is the ability for a 43-year-old accountant to dress in black leather, ride through small towns and have people be afraid of him."

–A Harley executive as quoted in Results-Based Leadership

Perhaps Dreamketing has prompted some people to create radical impressions of marketing. Tom Mahon in Science & Spirit (July 2002), wrote: "The goal of marketing is to make you unhappy with your life, to destabilize you, to make you think you're incomplete the way you are."

Relationship marketing, just like Dreamketing, attempts to create a bond between the brand and the individual consumer. It goes beyond customer satisfaction. The Harvard Business Review cited the work of Dr. Frederick Reichheld who reported that "two-thirds or more of customers who chose a new supplier said they were satisfied if not very satisfied with their former supplier."

Customer satisfaction is not enough anymore.

That's why there's a scramble among companies, multinationals especially, to put up CRM (customer relationship management) and customer loyalty programs. Soon everyone you do business with will be offering you and sending you suki club points, customized newsletters that look like glossy magazines, birthday cards and invitations to "exclusive members only" parties and sales to make you, the customer, feel complete, content, and experience happiness with their brand so that you don't look—or buy—from anyone else.

It's a mad scramble to add "more value." The problem is, "most executives have no idea how to add value to a market in the metaphysical world. But that is what the market will cry out for in the future. There is no lack of 'physical' products to choose between." (Jesper Kunde, Unique Now … or Never, on the excellence of Nike, Nokia, Lego et al, as quoted by Tom Peters in his Manila seminar.)

Bonding with customer

A couple of years ago, INDIO, a local CRM agency headed by Angeli Beltran-Lambsdorff, put together an award winning program for Ford Philippines. (Visit www.IndioCRM.com for details.) They invited recent Ford Expedition and F150 buyers to an "adventure trek" in the Mt. Pinatubo area. They also asked these buyers to bring along a friend to experience what it was like to drive a Ford through lahar, rivers and really rough terrain. And of course, the Ford owners got free gas, free lunch and some other Ford souvenirs to complete the experience. It was bonding time between Expedition and F150 owners and Ford. This also of course impressed the friends of the Ford owners prompting them to want to buy an Expedition or F150 as well to be part of the Ford family.

Your product in reality may actually be at par or even have less features than your competitors, but in your customers' eyes—it's okay. You're like family. You and the brand have a relationship. They won't just leave you unless you close shop or leave town.

Hope you didn't let us marketers make your Christmas too materialistic. Always remember that Christ is the reason for the season! Have a happy new year!

Questions or comments? Email us at MarketingRx@SaltAndLightVentures.com

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Notice to the Public

Notice is given that Philippine Daily Inquirer Official Receipt number 80000880 and 80000881 assigned to Atrium Branch were lost.

Any transactions made using these receipts will not be honored.

PDI Management

(PDI – Dec. 18, 26, 2003 & Jan. 2, 2004)

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

PDIC Extension Office, 6782 SSS Building, Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City
Telephone No. 841-4000; Fax No. 841-4926; Website: www.pdic.gov.ph;
Email: bacsecretariat@pdic.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for Manpower Services, Preventive and Remedial Maintenance Service for IT Equipment, and re-bidding for the Open Steel Shelves.

PARTICULARS	QTY./ CONTRACT DURATION	APPROVED BUDGET
1. Manpower Services for PDIC Chino Roces & Ayala Extension Offices Minimum Experience Requirement: At least 3 years experience in providing manpower services to government agency/ies or institution/s; and bank/s or financial institution/s and employing at least 200 contractual personnel.	85 contractual personnel Six (6) months with possible extension for another six months (February 1, 2004 to July 31, 2004/ January 31, 2005)	Six (6) months: P6.75 million One (1) year : P13.5 million
2. Preventive and Remedial Maintenance Service for IT Equipment	January-December 2004	P500,000.00
3. Open Steel Shelves	106 units	P742,000.00
Source of Funding	2003 and 2004 Corporate Operating Budget	
Pre-bid Conference	January 8, 2004, 9:30 AM at the 9th Flr., PDIC Extension Office, SSS Bldg., Ayala Avenue cor. V.A. Rufino St., Makati City	

The Instructions to Bidders and the Terms of Reference shall be made available to interested bidders starting December 19, 2003, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the BAC Secretariat, 9th Floor, PDIC Extension Office, SSS Building, Ayala Avenue cor. V.A. Rufino St., Makati City after payment of a non-refundable amount of P300.00 for each item to be bid.

Deadline for the submission of Eligibility Requirements and Proposals shall be on January 23, 2004, 1:00 PM at the Bidding Room, 9th Floor, PDIC Extension Office, SSS Bldg., Ayala Ave. cor. V.A. Rufino St., Makati City. Opening of eligibility requirements and bids shall follow immediately.

Criteria for eligibility check, examination and evaluation of bids and post-qualification shall be on non-discretionary pass/fail basis.

The eligibility screening of bidders, evaluation of bids and awarding of contract shall be governed by Republic Act 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

PDIC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or any part thereof, to waive any informality or minor defect, and to accept the offer most advantageous to the Government.

PDIC shall in no case be held responsible or liable for any and all costs associated with the bidder's participation in the bidding process regardless of its results.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
(FOR GOODS, SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS)

(PDI–Dec. 19 & 26, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)** invites authorized distributors/ suppliers of Electronic Truckscales to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **Supply, Delivery, Construction, Installation and Commissioning of Pit-less Type Electronic Truckscales** in the following locations:

Place	Equipment/Kind	Approved budget
Narra, Palawan	60 - Ton Pitless type Electronic Truckscale	P 3,200,000.00
Pili, Camarines Sur	60 - Ton Pitless type Electronic truckscale	P 3,200,000.00
	Total	P 6,400,000.00

The schedule of bidding are as follows:

Submission of Letter of Intent	Dec. 19, 2003 - Jan. 5, 2004
Issuance of Registration/ Eligibility Requirements	Dec. 19, 2003 - Jan. 6, 2004
Deadline of submission of Eligibility Requirements	January 22, 2004
Issuance of Notice of Eligibility	Dec. 22, 2003 - Jan. 23, 2004
Issuance of Bid Documents	December 22, 2003
Pre-Bidding Conference	January 27, 2004, 2:00 PM
Bidding proper	February 10, 2004
Submission of bids	1:00 - 1:45 PM
Opening of bids	2:00 PM

Eligibility and registration requirements maybe secured and submitted to the BAC Secretariat upon presentation of Letter of Intent not later than January 6, 2004 at National Food Authority - Annex, 5th Floor Tengsico Building, 101 E Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City. For further inquiries, please call Tel. No. 712-0454 or 749-9490.

Bidding documents shall be issued only to eligible bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P5,000.00.

Venue for the Pre-Bidding Conference and the Submission and Opening of Bids shall be at the NFA Boardroom, National Food Authority, 10th Floor Matimyas Building, 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City.

NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any minor defect therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the government.

The NFA assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expense incurred in the preparation of their respective bid.

(Sgd.) **GREGORIO Y. TAN, JR.**
Deputy Administrator & Chairman
BAC for Operations-related Procurement

(PDI - Dec 19 & 26 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agriculture
Philippine Rice Research Institute
Maligaya, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija

INVITATION TO BID

The Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), invites Contractors classified by CIAP and duly registered with PCAB to bid for the projects hereunder enumerated.

Name of Project/ Location	Approved Budget	Contractors' Classification	Contract Duration
1) R & D Building and Scientists'/Guest House; Philrice - Isabela, San Mateo Isabela	P10 M	At least Medium A	120 CD
2) Scientists' / Guest House PhilRice-Agusan, RTR, Agusan del Sur	1.5 M	At least Small B	75 CD
3) Installation of domestic water system (development of groundwater source, installation of pump, overhead tank with 3,000 gal cap. etc;) PhilRice - Central Experiment Station Maligaya, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija	1.5 M	At least Small B	60 CD
4) Seed Storage/warehouse (with cold room facilities) PhilRice-Midsayap, Midsayap, Cotabato	3.0 M	At least Medium A	90 CD
5) Farm Operations & Mechanization Building and Shop and Crop Processing Shed PhilRice - Central Experiment Station Maligaya, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija	5.5 M	At least Medium A	120 CD

SCHEDULE OF PRE-BIDDING AND BIDDING

Activity	Time, Date and Venue
Submission of Letter of Intent	January 5, 2004, PhilRice, Science City of Muñoz, NE
Issuance of Bid Documents and Pre-qualification Forms	January 30, 2004, PhilRice, Science City of Muñoz, NE
Pre-bid Conference & site inspection	At least one week after Issuance of Bid Documents
Submission/Opening of Bids	At least one week after Pre-bid Conference

Interested parties may secure the forms and other requirements for registration at the PhilRice BAC Secretariat on December 29, 2003 only, upon presentation of a Letter of Intent addressed to the Executive Director and payment of a non-refundable registration fee of Php2,000. Only those issued with Certificates of Official Registration may apply for eligibility. Bid documents and Plans for each project will be issued only to eligible Contractors, after paying a non-refundable of 5,000.00 to P 10,000.00 depending on the cost of the project.

All particulars relative to the procurement of these projects shall be governed by the provisions of existing laws and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

For more information, please call the Infrastructure Unit, Physical Plant Division at Telephone Nos. 044-4560-285; 4560-2581 local 522 or 528.

PhilRice reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids thereof, waive any defects or formalities found therein and to accept or reject any or to award to any contractor whose bid is considered most advantageous to PhilRice. PhilRice does not guarantee award of contract under this announcement.

(Sgd.) **LEOCADIO S. SEBASTIAN**
Executive Director

(PDI- December 19 & 26, 2003)

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
PNOC The Energy Company
PNOC Energy Companies Bldg., Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio,
1201 Makati City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO Tel No. 893 6001/1320

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

ENGAGEMENT OF A GEOTHERMAL WELLHEAD EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT TOOL (GWERT) EDC03-126

The Approved Budget is P3,481,500.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 1 year.

Application Forms for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o R.A. Sison) starting **December 16, 2003** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pesos: Two Hundred (P200.00).

For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **January 7, 2004, 2:30 p.m.** at the Conference Room, Ground Flr., of PNOC EDC's Building V.

Contractor not yet included in the PNOC-EDC's List of Registered Contractors, who wishes to participate in the public bidding in order to facilitate eligibility check/ screening is requested to register with the said registration office by submitting the following basic requirements which should be maintained current and updated every year; 1) DTI Business Name Registration and/or Certified true copy of valid SEC Registration Certificate, as appropriate; 2) Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License; 3) Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN); 4) Value Added Tax (VAT) Certificate of Registration; 5) Notarized statement that contractor/firm is not "blacklisted" or barred from bidding by any government agency, office or corporation, including, non-inclusion in the "blacklist" of contractors issued by CIAP; 6) Audited Financial Statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing among others, its total and current assets and liabilities inclusive of Income Tax Return and Receipt; and 7) Contractor's License, where applicable. A Certificate of Submission shall be issued to contractors upon approval.

Applications for Eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group at the above address **not later than 2:00 p.m. of January 20, 2004** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

(Sgd.) MICHAEL R. RODRIGUEZ
Manager, Operations Services Division

(PDI – Dec. 26, 2003)

Republic of the Philippines
City of Sorsogon

OFFICE OF THE CITY MAYOR

WANTED RURAL HEALTH PHYSICIAN

The City Government of Sorsogon is in need of a ***Rural Health Physician*** for the Sorsogon City Amberg Hospital.

COMPENSATION PACKAGE

- **Basic Salary – (Php 18,000 per month)**
- **Free Board and Lodging**
- **Renewal of Contract every six (6) months**

Interested applicants are required to fax/send their Personal Data Sheet (CSC Revised Form 212). Resumé or Curriculum Vitae with cover letter and pertinent documents to:

Mayor Sally A. Lee
c/o Ms. Asia Olbes
Office of the City Mayor
2/F Shopping Center Sorsogon
Fax No. (056) 211-7950

For details, call: (056) 211-1314 Dr. Lee / (056) 211-4669 Dr. Garcia
Note: Please confirm your desire within fifteen (15) days upon publication.

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Brgy. Cogon, Diversion Road, Digos City, Davao del Sur
Tel. No. 082-553-8704, Fax No. 082-553-8546

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For more information please contact: Engr. Jun Pollente (Cell No. 0917-502-6054)

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Megamall
635-0219, 635-0220

DBP Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines will receive sealed bids on January 8, 2004, 2:00 p.m., at the DBP Head Office Auditorium, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City for the following properties on **CASH BASIS:**

CODE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM BID
REAL ESTATE			
MANILA			
AMD-ML-102	No. 100 Industry Road II cor. Reparo Road, Araneta University Village, Malabon	2,380 m² industrial lot (TCT No. M-21827) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 31,861,300.00
AMD-ML-60B	No. 4 Crestline Road, Blue Ridge Subd., Quezon City	835.5 m² residential lot (TCT No. N-251919) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 8,651,500.00
PF-GST-01	Lot 26 Blk. 1, Quezon's Place, Teoville West, San Dionisio, Parañaque	321 m² residential lot (TCT No. T-150452)	P 1,605,000.00
CAVITE			
AMD-ED-103	Bo. San Jose, Tagaytay City	10,980 m² untitled industrial/residential lot (TD No. 2001-027-01428) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 16,333,300.00
PF-GST-02	Lot 7 Blk. 4, Family Village, Panapaan, Bacoor	240 m² residential lot (TCT No. T-267251)	P 720,000.00
NUEVA ECIJA			
CWB-2	Marawara, Jaen	1,000 m² interior residential lot (TCT No. NT-286889) w/ bldg. & imprvts.	P 276,000.00

BIDDERS ARE REMINDED

1. To inspect the properties to determine their actual condition before the bidding;
2. To submit in DBP's official bid form available at the AMD-Acquired Assets, 2nd Floor, DBP Head Office during office hours; and
3. To be on time. No bids will be accepted once unsealing of the bids commences. The sale shall be subject to other terms and conditions which may be imposed by the Bank.

DBP RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE BANK IS FINAL AND BINDING.

For inquiries, please call telephone numbers:

892-1566 / 893-7172 or 818-9511 loc. 2218/2252 for Code starting with AMD & PF;
926-1686 or 818-9511 loc. 1411 for CWB

ASSET MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

(PDI – December 26 & 27, 2003)

APOLOGY TO WD-40 COMPANY

The owners, management and staff of COMMANDER AUTO SUPPLY located at 408 Claro M. Recto Avenue, Binondo, Manila, and sincerely apologizes to **WD-40 COMPANY** of the United States, owner of the well-known mark **"WD-40"** for superior quality rust prevention and corrosion control, protective and decorative coatings, for selling products bearing the trademark **"WD-40"** from sources unauthorized by **WD-40 COMPANY**.

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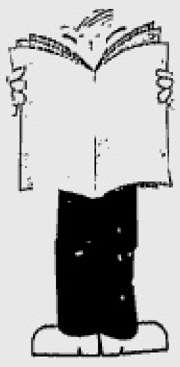

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"YOU will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in Your presence, the delights at Your right hand for evermore." Ps 16:5, 11

VICENTA OGILVIE ARROYO

(Widow of the late PEDRO LACSON ARROYO)

Peacefully went home to her loving FATHER & CREATOR
on December 23, 2003 at the age of 89.

Precious mother to: (†) Luis Antonio (Picoling)
Mercedes & Eduardo Araneta
Rosario & Herman Montenegro
Carmen & Rolando Geronimo
Jesusa & Alexander Babst

Her bereaved brother, Ramon & Nitang Ogilvie
brothers-in-law, Mariano Lacson Arroyo
& Antonio Lacson Arroyo

Her grandchildren, Miguel & Val, Maricar & Ronnie, Chesca & Ed,
Greg & Ella, Emilie & Babie, Angela & Mikey, & Rose
Louie, Trina & Arjay
Stephanie, Raymund & Margo

Her great grandchildren, Rafael, Franco, Angelo, Louie, Renzo, Sami & Sari
& Mikaela Gloria

She lies in state at the Capilla del Señor, Santuario de San Antonio, Makati and will be interred on Saturday, December 27 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Parañaque after the 8:30 a.m. Mass at Santuario.

Eternal Rest grant unto Fely O Lord
and let perpetual light shine upon her.
May she rest in peace.

FELICIDAD HALILI TOLENTINO

First Death Anniversary
December 26, 2003

Masses will be offered in the following churches
for the eternal repose of her soul.

St. Andrews, Parañaque	Dec. 23 & 26; 6:15 am
National Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Baclaran	Dec. 23 & 26; 6:40 am
Jesus the Way the Truth and the Light, Reclamation Pasay	Dec. 26
Nuestra Señora de Guia, Ermita	Dec. 23 & 26; 8:00 am
Malate Church	Dec. 23 & 26; 7:00 am
St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Magallanes Village	Dec. 23 & 26; 6:00 pm
St. John Bosco, Makati	Dec. 26; 12:15 noon
St. Joseph, Parañaque	Dec. 23 & 26; 6:30 am
St. Perpetua, D. Tuazon	Dec. 26; 6:00 am
Lourdes Church, Retiro	Dec. 26
Our Lady Mediatrix of all Grace, Carmel, Lipa	Dec. 17-25; 8:00 am

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DEMETRIO PACELO TUVERA

Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 20, 2003 at the age of 88.

He is survived by his wife **CELIA GALANG**; children **CARMEN, JULIE, MINNIE, MINA & ROGER, EMY & ANTHONY, RAYMUND** and **JAYJAY**; grandchildren **MICHAEL, RANDELL, CZARINA, DAVID** and **JOHN**; siblings **ANDRING & NITA, BAS & CED, FANNY, CERING** and **MARING**.

His remains lie in state at Ambassador Funeral Homes, A. Mabini St. cor. C3, Caloocan City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 27, 2003 at Ever Memorial Garden, along North Luzon Expressway thru Lawang Bato Tollway Exit after the 10:00 a.m. Necrological Service.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
1. Copy of Death Certificate
2. Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT

MESSAGE OF THANKS

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

REQUIEMS

FREE OBIT DESIGN

WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS and bank-to-bank payments

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

PSALM
Power Sector
Assets & Liabilities
Management Corporation

2/F, SGV II Bldg., Ayala Avenue, Makati City

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING REMITTANCES AND DISBURSEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSAL CHARGE

WHEREAS, Section 34 of Republic Act No. 9136 otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001" (the "Act" or "EPIRA") provides that a Universal Charge to be determined, fixed and approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission ("ERC") shall be imposed on all End-Users for the following purposes:

1. Stranded Debts and Stranded Contract Costs of National Power Corporation ("NPC") in excess of the amount to be assumed by the Government of the Philippines;
2. Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities;
3. Missionary Electrification;
4. The equalization of the taxes and royalties applied to indigenous or renewable sources of energy vis-à-vis imported energy fuels;
5. An environmental charge equivalent to one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P0.0025/kWh), which shall accrue to an environmental fund to be used solely for watershed rehabilitation and management and shall be managed by NPC under existing arrangements; and
6. A charge to account for all forms of cross-subsidies for a period not exceeding three (3) years.

WHEREAS, Section 5 of Rule 18 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of EPIRA ("IRR") mandates that the Universal Charge shall be a non-by passable charge which shall be (1) collected from all End-Users on a monthly basis by the Distribution Utilities or Suppliers in case of a Contestable Market; or (2) remitted directly to the National Transmission Corporation ("Transco") or its Concessionaire by any End-Users or Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility.

WHEREAS, Section 7 of Rule 18 of the IRR provides that all Self-Generation Facilities whether new, existing or under construction shall not be covered by the imposition of Universal Charge for a period of four (4) years from its imposition: *Provided*, That, such Self-Generation Facilities shall register with the ERC and PSALM.

WHEREAS, Section 34 of the Act mandates PSALM to be the administrator of the Universal Charge funds and requires PSALM to establish Special Trust Funds ("STFs") for this purpose.

WHEREAS, there is a need to establish procedures for the remittance and disbursement of the Universal Charge and for the timely provision of accurate information in relation thereto, to ensure that the objectives of the Universal Charge are achieved and to enable PSALM to fulfill its obligations under the Act.

WHEREAS, Section 6 (b) of Rule 18 of the IRR requires PSALM, in consultation with the DOF and with the approval of the ERC, to promulgate procedures and guidelines to govern all remittances to and disbursements from the Special Trust Funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, PSALM promulgates these "Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Remittances and Disbursements of the Universal Charge" as follows.

Section 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In compliance with the EPIRA and its IRR, these Guidelines are being issued by PSALM for:

(a) the remittance to the Special Trust Funds of the Universal Charge amounts collected or received by Distribution Utilities, Suppliers, and TRANSCO or its Concessionaire;

(b) the administration by PSALM of the STFs;

(c) the provision of information to PSALM so that it may comply with its obligations for the management of Universal Charge funds; and

(d) the disbursement of the Universal Charge by PSALM to the Beneficiaries in accordance with their entitlements as determined and approved by the ERC.

Section 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.01 Defined Terms: The following terms and expressions shall have the meanings set forth below:

"*Act*" or "*EPIRA*" refers to Republic Act No. 9136, otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001";

"*Beneficiaries*" means the entities eligible or authorized by the ERC to avail of the Universal Charge pursuant to EPIRA and its IRR as enumerated in Section 3.02 (*STFs and their Beneficiaries*);

"*BTr*" refers to the Bureau of Treasury;

"*Collecting Entities*" refers to (1) Distribution Utilities or Suppliers in case of Contestable Markets; and (2) TRANSCO or its Concessionaire in respect of End-Users and Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility;

"*Concessionaire*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR and, for the avoidance of doubt, references herein to TRANSCO shall apply equally to the Concessionaire once the Concessionaire has been appointed to assume TRANSCO's responsibilities;

"*Contestable Market*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Demand Draft*" refers to a check issued by a bank with guaranteed funding. This is negotiable only within provincial branches. This instrument is usually coded for security purposes;

"*Distribution Utility*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*DOE*" refers to the Department of Energy, the government agency created pursuant to Republic Act No. 7638 whose expanded functions are provided in the Act;

"*DOF*" refers to the Department of Finance, the government agency created pursuant to Executive Order No. 127;

"*End-User*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Energy Regulatory Commission*" or "*ERC*" refers to the regulatory agency created by Section 38 of the Act;

"*ERC Rules*" refers to the "ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge;

"*Government Financial Institution*" or "*GFI*" refers to financial institutions or corporations wholly owned and controlled by the National Government. For purposes of these Guidelines, the GFI must be acceptable to the DOF;

"*Guidelines*" refers to these "Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Remittances and Disbursements of the Universal Charge";

"*IRR*" refers to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the EPIRA;

"*Main Trust Account – Universal Charge*" means the bank account established by PSALM either with the BTr or a GFI acceptable by the DOF, purposely and exclusively for receiving the remittance of the Universal Charge collections from the Collecting Entities;

"*Manager's/Cashier's Check*" refers to a check issued by a bank with guaranteed funding. This instrument must be negotiable within Metro Manila only;

"*Market Operator*" shall have the same meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Missionary Electrification*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*National Power Corporation*" or "*NPC*" refers to the government corporation created pursuant to Republic Act No. 6395, as amended;

"*National Transmission Corporation*" or "*TRANSCO*" refers to the government corporation created pursuant to Section 8 of the EPIRA. References to TRANSCO in these Guidelines shall also be deemed as references to its Concessionaire;

"*Person*" refers to a natural or juridical person, as the case may be;

"*Petitioners*" refers to the Persons entitled to petition the ERC for availment of the Universal Charge as provided in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment);

"*Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation*" or "*PSALM*" refers to the government owned and controlled corporation created pursuant to Section 49 of the EPIRA;

"*Qualified Third Parties*" or "*QTPs*" refers to persons who meet the qualifications set by the DOE and who obtain the necessary permits from the ERC and any other agency as may be required to be an indirect beneficiary of a portion of the Universal Charge for Missionary Electrification;

"*Self-Generation Entity*" or "*Self-Generation Facility*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Small Power Utilities Group*" or "*SPUG*" refers to the functional unit of NPC created to pursue missionary electrification function;

"*Special Trust Fund*" or "*STF*" refers to a trust fund established by PSALM for each intended purpose of the Universal Charge and its corresponding Beneficiary or Beneficiaries as enumerated in Section 3.02 (*STFs and their Beneficiaries*);

"*STF Account*" means an account opened by PSALM either with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF, purposely and exclusively for remittances to or disbursements of the Universal Charge;

"*Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities*" has the same meaning as "Stranded Contract Costs of Eligible Contracts of Distribution Utilities" as defined in the IRR,

"*Stranded Contract Costs of NPC*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Stranded Debts of NPC*" or "*Stranded Debts*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Supplier*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"*Universal Charge*" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR.

"*WESM Rules*" shall refer to the rules governing the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market ("WESM"), promulgated by the DOE in its Department Circular No. 2002-06-003, dated 28 June 2002;

"*Wholesale Electricity Spot Market*" or "*WESM*" refers to the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market to be created in accordance with RA 9136.

2.02 Rules of Construction: Unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) Words singular and plural in number shall be deemed to include the other;
(b) Section headings are for convenience of reference only, do not form part of these Guidelines, and shall not be deemed to limit or otherwise affect any of the provisions hereof. References to Sections, unless otherwise indicated, are references to sections of these Guidelines;
(c) In the event that any of the capitalized terms above are defined through reference to the EPIRA and its IRR, in the event of a conflict, the EPIRA definition shall govern; and
(d) In the event that any of the capitalized terms above are defined through reference to the EPIRA and its IRR and such definition appears only in the EPIRA or the IRR, the term is deemed to have been defined by the document wherein the definition of such term appears.

The applicable laws, including the EPIRA, its IRR and other applicable government regulations, are incorporated herein by reference.

Section 3: COVERAGE

3.01 Petitioners for Availment: The following are entitled to petition the ERC for availment of the Universal Charge for each of the intended purposes:

(1) PSALM for Stranded Debt and Stranded Contract Costs of NPC;
(2) Distribution Utilities with respect to their respective Stranded Contract Costs;
(3) SPUG, for Missionary Electrification;
(4) Generation companies with respect to the equalization of taxes and royalties between indigenous or renewable energy resources and imported fuels;
(5) NPC with respect to the environmental charge of one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh) of sales; and
(6) NPC/PSALM and Distribution Utilities with respect to the mitigation of the removal of cross subsidies.

3.02 STFs and their Beneficiaries: These Guidelines cover the following STFs to be established by PSALM, as provided in Section 4.02 (The STFs), for each intended purpose identified in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment), and their respective beneficiaries:

(1) Stranded Debts and Stranded Contract Costs of NPC for PSALM;
(2) Stranded Contract Costs for Distribution Utilities as authorized by the ERC;
(3) Missionary Electrification for SPUG;
(4) Equalization of taxes and royalties between indigenous or renewable energy resources and imported fuels for generation companies sd authorized by the ERC;
(5) Environmental charge of one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh) of sales for NPC; and
(6) Mitigation of the removal of cross-subsidies for NPC/PSALM and Distribution Utilities.

The Petitioners shall be deemed the Beneficiaries with respect to their corresponding STFs only upon and to the extent of the approval by the ERC of their petition for availment of the Universal Charge.

3.03 Collecting Entities: These Guidelines apply to the following entities mandated by the Act to collect or receive the Universal Charge, as set out in the ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge:

(1) Distribution Utilities collecting from End-Users in the captive market;
(2) Suppliers collecting from End-Users in a contestable market;
(3) TRANSCO or its Concessionaire collecting the amounts remitted by End-Users and Self-Generation Entities which are not connected to a Distribution System.

Section 4: CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

4.01 The Main Trust Account - Universal Charge

(a) PSALM shall open one (1) Trust Account, referred to as the "Main Trust Account - Universal Charge", with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF. Collecting Entities shall deposit their collections of the Universal Charge in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.

(b) Within ten (10) business days of the approval of these Guidelines by the ERC, PSALM shall provide the Collecting Entities with the bank details and account number of the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.

(c) If there are any amendments to the bank details and account number of the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge, PSALM shall notify all of the Collecting Entities as soon as possible but in any case within ten (10) business days from the effectivity of such amendments.

4.02 The STFs

(a) Pursuant to Section 6 (a) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall create one (1) separate STF for each of the six (6) intended purposes enumerated in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment). These STFs shall be established with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF.

(b) PSALM will make disbursements of the Universal Charge to the respective Beneficiaries from these six (6) STFs.

(c) PSALM will enter into an appropriate agreement with the BTr or GFI detailing the terms for the maintenance of the STFs and the transfers of funds to and from the STFs. The terms of the agreement shall be consistent with the specific purposes for which the STFs were created in accordance with existing laws, government rules and regulations.

(d) Amounts remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge will be allocated to the six (6) STFs pursuant to Section 7(c).

(e) Any interest earned on monies in an STF Account shall form part of such STF and shall be used for the same specified purpose.

(f) The charges, expenses, fees and other costs imposed by the GFI or BTr for the administration of the STFs shall be monitored and accounted for by PSALM. The charges, expenses, fees and other costs shall be debited to each of the STFs *pro rata* to the amount of money passing through each STF.

Section 5: REMITTANCE OF UNIVERSAL CHARGE BY COLLECTING ENTITIES

5.01 Remittance Procedures: To avoid the penalties and unnecessary costs brought about by a delay in the remittance of the Universal Charge, the Collecting Entities shall faithfully comply with the procedures set forth below:

(a) Subject to Section 5.03 ("*Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge*"), each Collecting Entity shall remit its total actual collections of the Universal Charge to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge without need of prior demand from PSALM.

(b) The Universal Charge amounts collected during each calendar month shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour of the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month. In the event that the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month falls on a non-banking day or holiday, all Universal Charge collections shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour on the immediately succeeding banking day.

(c) For proper control and recording, each Collecting Entity shall submit all the necessary information to PSALM as required under Section 6 ("*Provision of Information*") at the same time as making its remittance to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.

(d) All remittances of the Universal Charge shall be in Philippines Pesos and shall be made through any one of the following forms, in each case clearly identifying the Collecting Entity and the billing and collection month to which the remittance pertains:

(1) Cash
(2) Manager's/Cashier's Check
(3) Demand Draft
(4) Fund Transfer
(5) Company Check

(e) PSALM shall confirm with the BTr or GFI the amount of the Universal Charge remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge by each Collecting Entity in each month. PSALM shall issue a confirmation notice to each Collecting Entity within five (5) business days confirming the receipt of its funds in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.

5.02 Late Remittances: Subject to Section 5.03 ("*Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge*"), failure of a Collecting Entity to remit without justifiable or valid reasons its total actual collections of the Universal Charge in each calendar month in accordance with Section 5.01 ("*Remittance Procedures*") shall subject such Collecting Entity to a late remittance interest charge and the fines and penalties provided in Section 8 of Rule 18 of the IRR. The procedures for late remittances are as follows:

(a) In the event that any Collecting Entity collects amounts from End-Users in respect of the Universal Charge in any calendar month but fails to remit the same to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour of the fifteenth (15th) day of the next calendar month, said Collecting Entity shall pay a late remittance interest charge on the amount collected and due but not remitted. The late remittance interest charge shall be applied to the difference between total actual collections of the Universal Charge for any calendar month and total actual remittances for said month, and will be calculated at the rate of five percent (5%) per month from the date upon which the remittance amount was due until the date when such amount is received in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.

(b) The late remittance interest charge shall be in addition to whatever amount of fine or penalty may be imposed by the ERC under Section 8 of Rule 18 of the IRR.

(c) Any late remittance interest charges shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge for disbursement to the STFs pro rata to the allocation of other remittances between the STFs.

(d) PSALM reserves the right to withhold any due disbursements of the Universal Charge to a Collecting Entity which has failed to remit its collections to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge or require the Collecting Entity to pay the late remittance interest charges in accordance with the procedures described herein.

(e) In the event that any Collecting Entity consistently delays in or fails to remit its Universal Charge collections for more than two (2) months, PSALM shall request the ERC to take appropriate action under Rule 18 of the IRR.

5.03 Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge: A Collecting Entity which is a Distribution Utility authorized by the ERC to avail of the Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities in any calendar month is entitled to withhold from its remittance to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge an amount reflecting the Universal Charge approved by the ERC for such purpose for the relevant month, in accordance with the procedure provided in this Section:

(a) In determining the amount which a Distribution Utility can net off from its remittance of Universal Charge to PSALM, the Distribution Utility shall not discriminate in its own favor at the expense of other beneficiaries in the event that actual collections differ from expected collections based on the level of kilowatt-hour sales used by ERC in setting the Universal Charge per kilowatt-hour (kWh). In such cases, the Distribution Utility shall only retain its proportionate share in the actual collection.

(b) For the avoidance of doubt, a Distribution Utility must remit to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge the amounts of Universal Charge collected from its End-Users pertaining to the other categories of Universal Charge. The balance of a Distribution Utility's entitlement to Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities for any month will be disbursed to said Distribution Utility by PSALM from the Universal Charge amounts collected for that purpose by other Collecting Entities, in accordance with Section 7 ("*Disbursements from the STFs*").

(c) Under no circumstances may a Distribution Utility withhold from its remittances to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge in respect of any month such amount in excess of that which the ERC has authorized said Distribution Utility to recover from the Universal Charge for its Stranded Contract Costs for that month.

Section 6: PROVISION OF INFORMATION

6.01 Reporting Requirements and Procedures

(a) In order for PSALM to monitor the proper remittance of Universal Charge collections by Collecting Entities for the protection of all End-Users, each Collecting Entity must furnish PSALM with relevant information on its billings and collections in each calendar month. The Market Operator is also required to submit information as set out in Section 6.04 so that PSALM may verify the information provided by Collecting Entities.

(b) The statements or information described in Sections 6.02 through 6.03 in respect of each calendar month should be submitted to PSALM (by electronic mail or facsimile transmission) by each Collecting Entity to arrive on or before the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month or in any case no later than the date on which the Collecting Entity remits its collections of the Universal Charge to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge. For documents sent by electronic mail or facsimile transmission, the original of said statement or report must be provided to PSALM within ten (10) business days from the remittance of the Universal Charge.

6.02 Reports by Distribution Utilities and Suppliers: In respect of each calendar month, each Collecting Entity that is a Distribution Utility or Supplier shall submit to PSALM:

(a) A certified statement of its total actual billings of electricity separately identifying the total amount billed in respect of each Universal Charge component. Such statement shall include the total actual sales of electricity in kWh. The form for the Universal Charge Total Actual Billings Statement and sample calculations are attached hereto as Annex C1 and C2, respectively.

Billing adjustments due to erroneous meter reading, or arithmetical mistakes or omissions shall be reflected in the Universal Charge Billing Form, duly supported by a certified true copy of the debit or credit memo issued by the Collecting Entity to the concerned customer.

Billing adjustments covering bad debts written off shall likewise be reflected in the Universal Charge Billing Form, duly supported by documents.

(b) A certified statement of its total actual collections separately identifying the amount collected for each Universal Charge component. The form for the Universal Charge Total Actual Collections and sample calculations are attached hereto as Annex D1 and D2 respectively.

(c) The statements identified in Sections 6.02(a) and 6.02(b) must be signed by the Chief Financial Officer or his equivalent or any authorized representative of such Collecting Entity.

(d) A Collecting Entity which is a Distribution Utility authorized by the ERC to collect an amount of Universal Charge in respect of its own Stranded Contract Cost must identify in its statement under Section 6.02(a) the amount which it is authorized by the ERC to avail from the Universal Charge for this purpose in the relevant calendar month and the amount which it has billed to its End-Users for this purpose in the relevant calendar month. In its statement under Section 6.02(b), said Distribution Utility shall identify separately the amount collected from its End-Users for this purpose and the amount withheld from its remittance to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge under Section 5.03 ("*Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge*").

6.03 Reports by TRANSCO

(a) TRANSCO shall submit the statements described in Section 6.02 ("*Reports by Distribution Utilities and Suppliers*") in respect of its invoices to and collections from End-Users which are connected to the transmission system and not connected to a distribution system. In case TRANSCO does not meter and/or invoice any such End-Users on the basis of kilowatt hours of sales, TRANSCO will include in its statement under Section 6.02(a) the basis on which it has estimated the kilowatt hours consumed by such End-Users in determining the Universal Charge amounts which it has invoiced.

(b) In respect of amounts remitted to TRANSCO (or its Concessionaire, as the case may be) by Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility, TRANSCO shall submit to PSALM a copy of the information which has been provided to TRANSCO by the Self-Generation Entities in support of their remittances. TRANSCO may summarize such information in the event that it is voluminous.

6.04 Reports by Market Operator: No later than the fifteenth (15th) day of each calendar month, the Market Operator shall submit to PSALM a summary of its actual meter readings in kilowatt hours for the immediately preceding calendar month separately identifying each metering point and the corresponding Distribution Utility, Supplier or End-User connected to the transmission system.

Section 7: DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE STFs

(a) The STFs shall be disbursed only for the specific purposes for which the same were created in accordance with existing laws, government rules and regulations.

(b) The STFs shall be disbursed and accounted for in accordance with the fundamental requirements for disbursement of trust funds as provided for under applicable law, including the Government Auditing Code of the Philippines (Presidential Decree 1445) and the Government Accounting and Auditing Manual promulgated by the Commission on Audit.

(c) The BTr or GFI shall distribute all the funds received in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge to the STFs based on instructions issued by PSALM no later than the 19th day of each calendar month (or, if this is a non-banking day or holiday, the next succeeding business day) reflecting the Beneficiaries' proportionate entitlements to avail of the Universal Charge. Sample calculations are set forth in Annex E.

(d) To facilitate close monitoring of disbursements from the STFs and their use for the intended purpose:

(1) Each Beneficiary shall promptly furnish PSALM with a certified true copy of the order (or other relevant ruling) issued by the ERC setting out the Beneficiary's entitlement to the Universal Charge in respect of each year or each calendar month, as the case may be.

(2) In respect of each calendar month and consistent with the information provided under Section 7(d)(1), each Beneficiary shall properly complete and certify the Universal Charge Disbursement Request Form as found in Annex E and submit the same to PSALM on or before the seventeenth (17th) day of the next calendar month.

(3) PSALM will make no disbursement to any Beneficiary from any of the STF Accounts unless the Universal Charge Disbursement Request Form is accomplished in all respects and has been presented to the satisfaction of PSALM on or before the seventeenth (17th) day of the next calendar month.

(4) Subject to Section 7(d)(4) and Section 7(f), PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse funds from the relevant STF Account to the Beneficiary on the twentieth (20th) day of each month (or, if this is a non-banking day or holiday, the next succeeding business day), either through funds transfer or Manager's Check. In case of payment by Manager's Check, the Beneficiary's authorized representative shall have to appear at the PSALM offices with all relevant documents to demonstrate such authority to claim the Manager's Check.

(5) Within five (5) calendar days from its receipt of the funds so disbursed, each Beneficiary must issue an official receipt in favor of PSALM. PSALM reserves the right to make no further disbursements to any Beneficiary until it has issued such official receipt for the disbursement.

(e) In the event that the balance in any STF Account for any calendar month exceeds the amount of the availment request or requests submitted by the Beneficiary or Beneficiaries of such account for such month, PSALM shall retain the balance within the STF Accounts to pay for periods where a shortfall occurs.

(f) In the event that the balance in any STF Account for any calendar month falls short of the Universal Charge availment request submitted by the Beneficiary of such account for such month, PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse only such amount not exceeding that which is in the STF Account. In the event that there are multiple Beneficiaries of any such STF Account, PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse the balance available in the account between the Beneficiaries *pro rata* to the Beneficiaries' availment requests for that month. The Beneficiary or Beneficiaries shall be entitled to recover any such shortfall in a later month in accordance with the true-up mechanism approved by the ERC for the relevant Universal Charge purpose.

(g) Nothing in these Guidelines shall restrict the right of NPC (SPUG) to disburse a portion of the Missionary Electrification component of the Universal Charge to QTPs provided such disbursement is in accordance with law and with the approval of the DOE and ERC.

Section 8: AUDIT AND REPORTING

(a) Acting in its capacity as administrator of the STF Accounts, PSALM shall:
(1) Maintain monthly records of each component of Universal Charge billings, collections, remittances and disbursements.
(2) Reconcile each component of Universal Charge billings, collections, and remittances with the books of accounts of Collecting Entities.
(3) Maintain records of Universal Charge availments due and paid to each of the Beneficiaries in each month, including separate books of accounts for over-recovery of the Distribution Utility stranded cost component.
(4) Reconcile Universal Charge availments due and paid to each of the Beneficiaries with the books of accounts of Beneficiaries on a monthly basis.
(5) Whenever requested by the ERC, inform the ERC of the outstanding balance of each of the STF.

(b) As required by Section 6 (d) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall submit to the DOF and ERC on a quarterly basis a report on the remittances and disbursements of the STFs.

(c) As required by Section 3 (l) of Rule 13 of the IRR, PSALM shall ensure that SPUG conducts proper monitoring, accounting and control of expenditures and efficient utilization of the Missionary Electrification funds from the Universal Charge. SPUG shall submit to PSALM a detailed yearly report containing:

(1) Historical actual Operating Costs separately identifying expenditures on fuel, lubricants, purchased power, personal services and other operating and maintenance expenses for the prior year and projected Operating Costs for the same categories for the current year and the next succeeding two years.

(2) Historical actual Capital Expenditures for expansion, rehabilitation and installation of facilities for new areas of development based on the approved MEDP for the prior year and projected Capital Expenditures for the same categories for the current year and the next succeeding two years.

(d) As required by Section 5 (b) of Rule 18 of the IRR, each Collecting Entity shall maintain separate books of accounts for the collections and remittances to PSALM of the Universal Charge. Such books of accounts must be made available to the ERC and PSALM during business hours upon two (2) days prior written notice.

(e) As required by Section 6 (e) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall maintain separate books of accounts for the disbursements to Distribution Utilities of the Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities and shall use the same to determine whether there has been any over-recovery by any Distribution Utility. PSALM will make such books of accounts available to the ERC for purposes of monitoring and accounting for sums collected from the Universal Charge.

(f) Each Collecting Entity shall submit to PSALM a yearly audited report of total actual collections and total actual remittances of the Universal Charge.

(g) In the event that PSALM discovers any discrepancy between expected and actual collections, or between actual collections and actual remittances, or any other indication that a Collecting Entity is failing to comply with these Guidelines, PSALM shall have the right to seek an explanation from such Collecting Entity or to refer the matter to the ERC for investigation.

Section 9: LIABILITY

(a) PSALM shall not be held liable by any third party, including the beneficiaries of the STFs, for any non-remittance or partial remittance should the same be attributable to the fault or negligence of any of the Collecting Entities or any of its officers, employees, agents or assigns or any other party. Any Collecting Entity who is found by final judgment to be at fault shall immediately reimburse PSALM within five (5) days from demand of any amount expended by PSALM as payment for damages, expenses and other costs, incurred and paid pursuant to any settlement or legal proceedings, whether in the nature of administrative, civil or criminal, whenever PSALM is included as a party to any proceeding due to the fault or negligence of any Collecting Entity, its officers, employees, agents or assigns.

(b) In accordance with the EPIRA, the IRR and the ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge, the ERC may impose sanctions on any Collecting Entity for its failure to comply with these Guidelines or any portion thereof.

Section 10: FINES AND PENALTIES

The ERC may impose the appropriate fines and penalties for any violation or non-compliance with these Guideline as provided in Section 5 of the Guidelines to Govern the Imposition of Administrative Sanctions in the Form of Fines and Penalties Pursuant to Section 46 of RA 9136 dated May 17, 2002.

Section 11: AMENDMENTS

Any amendment to, or revision of these Guidelines may be proposed by PSALM, in consultation with the DOF and subject to the approval of the ERC.

Section 12: SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

Should any provision or section of these Guidelines be declared unconstitutional or contrary to law, the parts not so declared shall remain in full force and effect.

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5	MANO PO 2
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8	CRYING LADIES

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3	FANTASTIC MAN
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4	MANO PO 2

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7149522 • 7161416

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8	HOMECOMING
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10	FANTASTIC MAN

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3	CRYING LADIES
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6	FILIPINAS
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8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	MALIKMATA
10	MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9359745

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3	HOMECOMING
4	MALIKMATA
5	FILIPINAS
6	CRYING LADIES
7	MANO PO 2
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	MALIKMATA
11	CRYING LADIES
12	HOMECOMING

SM CITY DAVAO
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6	CRYING LADIES

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9	MALIKMATA
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	CAPTAIN BARBELL
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2	CRYING LADIES
3	HOMECOMING
4	MANO PO 2

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3200422

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2	RESERVED
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5	CRYING LADIES
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8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

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3	CRYING LADIES
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6	HOMECOMING
7	CRYING LADIES

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7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	FILIPINAS

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935-3229 / 31

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	MALIKMATA
4	CRYING LADIES
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MANO PO 2
7	HOMECOMING
8	MANO PO 2

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3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	FANTASTIC MAN

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2	CRYING LADIES
3	MALIKMATA
4	FILIPINAS

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FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	FANTASTIC MAN
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	MALIKMATA

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HOMECOMING	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
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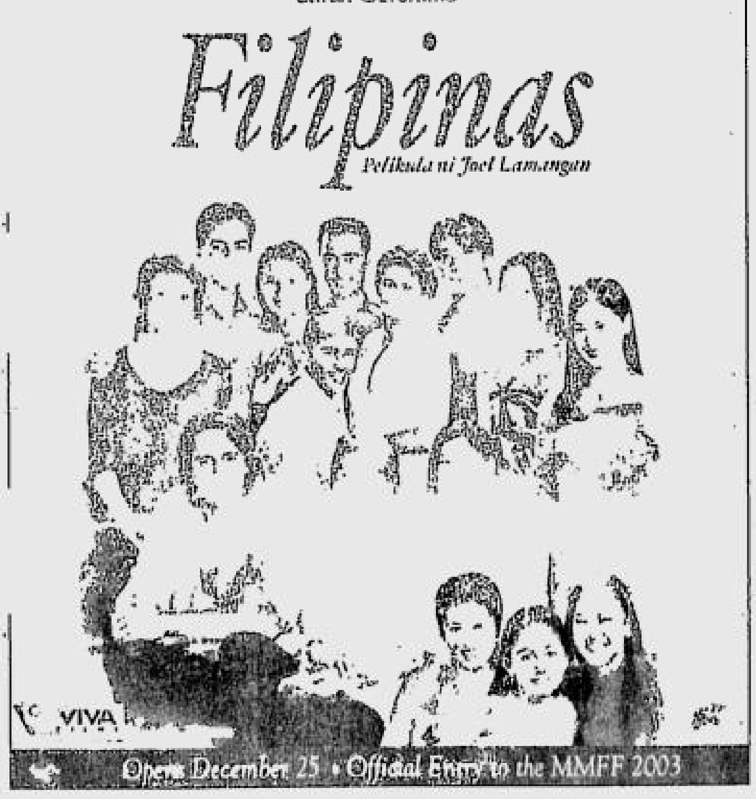

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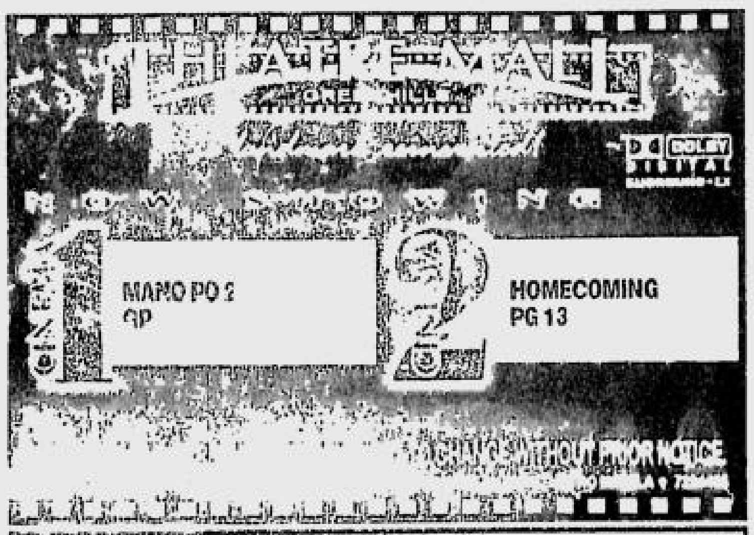

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2	HOMECOMING PG 13

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BUSINESS

NPC seeks DOJ, Neda nod on coal contracts

By Ronnel W. Domingo

NATIONAL Power Corp. is seeking approval from the Department of Justice and the National Economic and Development Authority on the to Chinese coal suppliers of two contracts worth of P1.8 billion.

A Napocor official familiar with the matter said in an interview the approvals were required under Executive Order 109-A, which lays the rules for government procurement done through "alternative means."

"Shenhua Coal Trading Co. and China Coal (formerly China National Coal Import and Export Co.) have submitted best prices in a 'seal proposals procedure' conducted on Dec. 18," the official said.

Shenhua and China Coal were each the lone bidders for two contracts during an auction held last Dec. 15.

Napocor declared a failed bidding as the prices submitted were above the approved budget for the contracts.

The contracts each cover 325,000 metric tons of coal for delivery to the 1,200-megawatt Sual plant in Pangasinan and the 600-MW Masinloc plant in Zambales.

The state firm had set a price ceiling of $15.6 million for the Sual contract and $13.65 million for the Masinloc contract.

However, China Coal offered about $17.32 million (P953.5 million) for Sual while Shenhua offered $16.42 million (P903.1 million) for Masinloc.

The failed bidding prompted Napocor to call for sealed proposals, inviting a couple of Australian firms to tender offers.

"This procedure represents an alternative means of procurement since we choose whom to invite as opposed to a public bidding where anybody can apply for prequalification," the source explained.

The person added that the Australian suppliers failed to offer better prices compared to those of the Chinese firms.

In a related matter, Napocor would bid out next month the second batch of fuel supply contracts for Sual and Masinloc at historic high prices of as high as P983.12 million amid a supply shortage in its main coal supplier China.

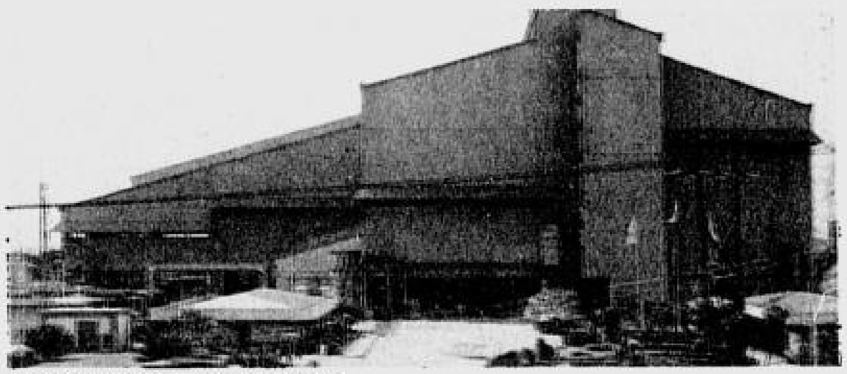
In a notice to suppliers, Napocor said each contract for 325,000 metric tons of coal for the 1,200-megawatt Sual power plant in Pangasinan would be auctioned off on Jan. 16.

The Sual contract was given a price ceiling of $17.875 million or $55 per ton.

At the same time, another contract worth $13.65 million or about P750.75 million for 325,000 tons of coal for the 600-MW Masinloc power plant in Zambales.

Local firms buck grant of tariff shield to NSC

By Michelle V. Remo



NATIONAL Steel Plant in Iligan

THE FEDERATION of Philippine Industries has moved to support calls by local food processors and tin can manufacturers against the possible granting of tariff protection to the reviving National Steel Corp.

The FPI, in a letter to the Department of Trade and Industry, has asked government to retain tariffs on imported steel billets, hot/cold rolled coils, and tin plates at the current zero level.

The industry group said reimposing tariffs on the steel products would increase cost of production and therefore affect operations and possibly lead to closures mostly of businesses in the downstream industries.

"This is turn will affect the profitability of the NSC itself because its market, the downstream industries, will be shrinking, resulting in the vicious cycle of increased costs, closures, and eventually,the closure of NSC itself," FPI said.

The Philippine Iron and Steel Institute, for its part, recommended that the government just focus on giving the NSC investor tax breaks as a form of incentive instead of tariff protection.

PISI said there are about 782 steel manufacturing companies in the country that directly hire some 62,000 employees and which have invested P62.25 billion for modern equipment.

The group said these local steel firms have already become competitive, but are threatened by the prospect of a higher production cost should tariffs on the steel products be reimposed.

Both the FPI and PISI have asked the trade department to first confer with concerned industry associations before deciding to grant NSC tariff protection.

Earlier, food processors namely the Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (Pampi), the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers Inc. (PCFM), and the Coconut Oil Refiners Association (Cora), have asked government not to grant tariff protection to NSC.

The mothballed NSC is expected to be rehabilitated early next year as the offer of foreign bidder Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. has already been submitted to the boards of each of the NSC creditor-banks for approval.

PAL hurting from fuel price rise, peso-dollar fluctuations

By Abigail L. Ho

THE CONTINUING rise in jet fuel prices in the world market as well as fluctuations in the peso-dollar exchange rate has left Philippine Airlines Inc. hurting.

PAL president and chief operating officer Avelino Zapanta said in an interview that while 50 percent of the company's fuel requirements had already been hedged, the remaining half remained sensitive to price fluctuations in the world market.

"Fuel prices are still rising. Although 50 percent of our fuel has been hedged for the long-term, 50 percent is still subjected to fluctuations in prices. The average now is around $36 per barrel and it's still going up. Our budgeting was for $28 a barrel," he said.

The price of jet fuel has seen a steady climb over the past three months. From an average of $33.90 per barrel in October, the price has risen to $35.89 per barrel in November.

As of Dec. 22, jet fuel price has spiked to $37.51 per barrel, less than $2 shy of the $39-per-barrel high posted at the height of the United States-Iraq war earlier in the year.

In 2002, the average prices of jet fuel in the last three months of the year was considerably lower than the ones posted this year.

The monthly average prices then were $32.43 per barrel in October, $29.38 per barrel in November and $32.10 per barrel in December.

As fuel prices continue their ascent, the peso also remains weak against the dollar, particularly these past few months because of various political announcements and the resignation of certain Cabinet officials.

The peso nosedived to 55.73 against the dollar at the tail end of November, the lowest since the days of the impeachment proceedings against then President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

This brought the November average to P55.39 to the dollar, higher than the P54.98 average posted in October.

Despite the volatility of fuel prices and the fluctuations in foreign exchange, Zapanta said the recent capture of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein by American forces could have a positive impact on world oil production.

"Next month, with the capture of Saddam, the Americans may be able to produce oil from Iraqi pipelines. This may then increase production and possibly lead to lower prices," he said.

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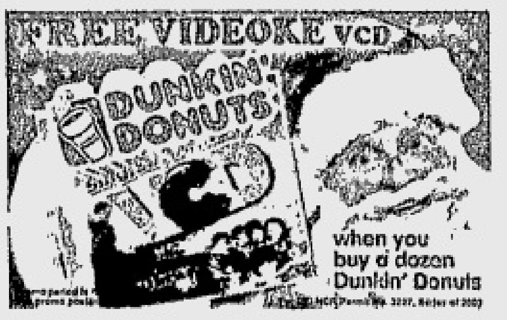
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The President's other designer

Rem Divino designs GMA's formal dresses. Rem who?

PURPLE REIGN. Semi off-shoulder pleated chiffon top accented with a crystal brooch and paired with a Mondrian design fully beaded skirt

Text by Cheche V. Moral
Photos by Chito Vecina

IS it any surprise that this designer, who's used to dressing up sheiks and princesses, is now weaving his creative genius for the country's head of state?

The choice of Rem Divino to design President Macapacal-Arroyo's formal dresses came as a shock to many because, after all, who is Rem Divino?

"I've been passing by his shop for a long time, and I've always been amazed at his displays," says Joanne Zapanta-Andrada, the President's wardrobe consultant. "His displays were consistently good!"

After a year, the former ramp model finally decided to check out the shop and asked to try on the gown in the window. She was pleased immensely. She wore it to a high-profile wedding, and was delighted at the other guests' reactions.

"They thought it was a Joe Salazar!" she says, giggling. She knew right then she wanted to work with Divino.

Relative unknown

The 34-year-old designer may still be a relative unknown hereabouts, even after his stint with the President, but he has actually been designing for 19 years. Divino is publicity-shy.

He began dabbling in design when he was only 15 years old for a manufacturer supplying Shoemart. He finished a design course at Slim's. Briefly, he enrolled in the fine arts program of University of Santo Tomas before the lure of big bucks summoned.

At 18, he left for Dubai to become one of the five in-house designers of a high-end fashion house catering to Middle Eastern royalty. He was the only Filipino in the team that was also composed of two Britons, an Italian and a Frenchman.

At Balqis Haute Couture in Dubai, Divino learned unique combinations of fabrics, and intricate beadings from frequent trips to

THE PRESIDENT'S/ C2

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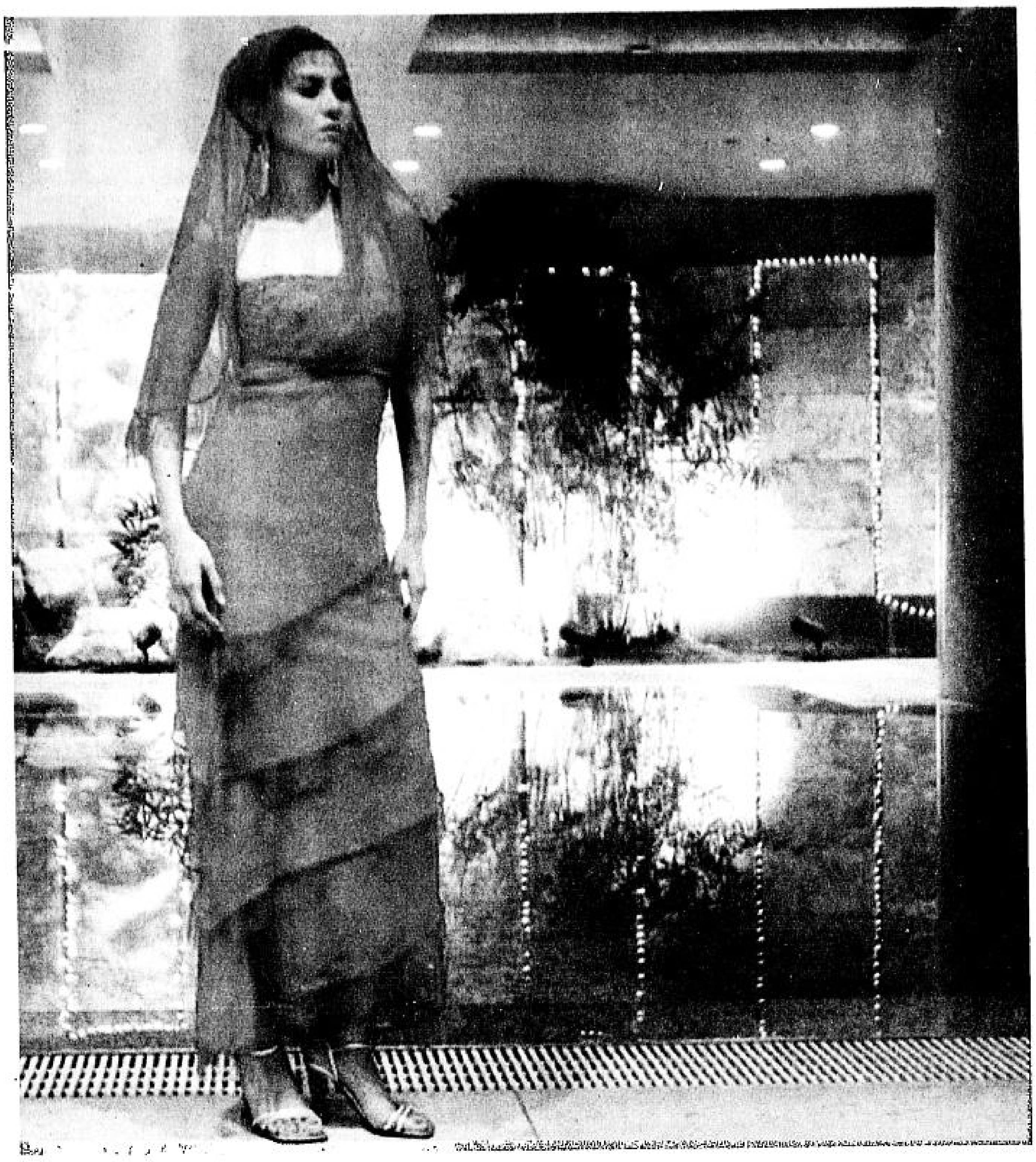
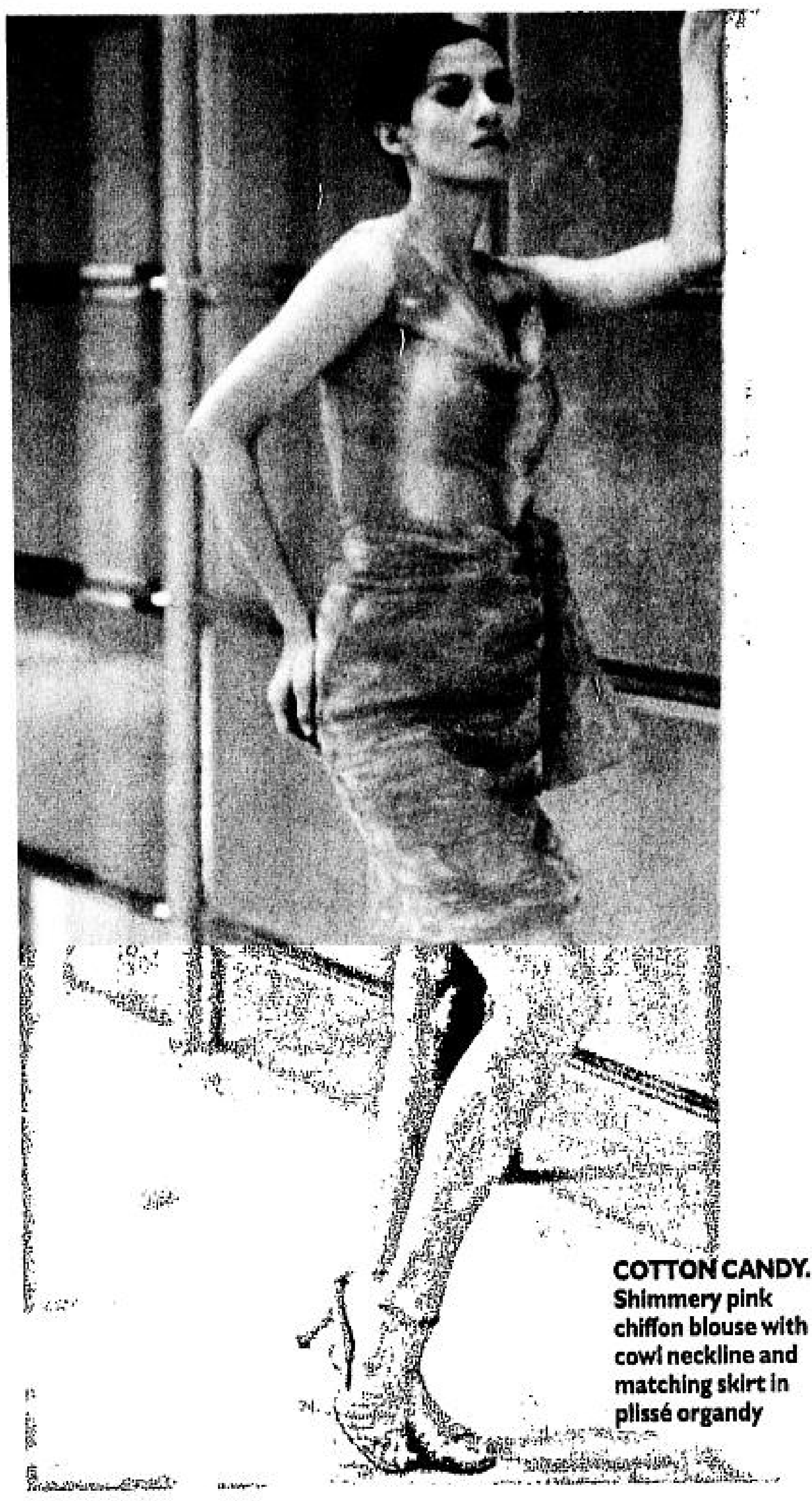
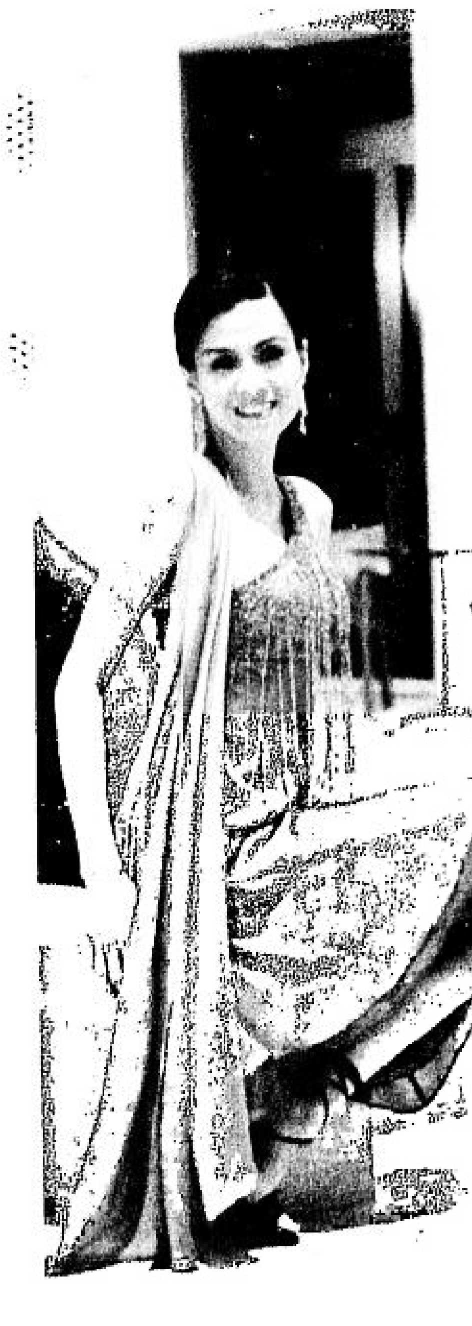


CRIMSON TIDE. Shredded red chiffon evening gown with cord-and-lace veil



COTTON CANDY. Shimmery pink chiffon blouse with a cowl neckline and matching skirt in plissé organdy

The President's other designer



BRIEF ENCOUNTER. Fully beaded asymmetric cocktail dress in shades of rust and maroon

MODEL: PAULETTE QUINTO
HAIR AND MAKEUP: ROY CALMA AND LEAH RAMIREZ OF POINT CUT SALON (TEL. 8258579)
SHOT ON LOCATION AT ESSENSA CONDOMINIUMS, FORT BONIFACIO, TAGUIG
SPECIAL THANKS TO TINA FUNTANILLA

From page C1

India, which is adjacent to the tiny Arab state. He had the privilege of using the same materials used by the houses of Nina Ricci, Valentino and Ungaro.

After two years, an Arab friend made an offer Divino found hard to resist: a new fashion house with him as sole designer. Always a go-getter, the young man left Balqis to open the fashion shop which he named Scalini Haute Couture. The owner gave him full power to hire his own Filipino staff.

Scalini was much smaller than his previous stint, but catered to the same market. Divino was thoroughly satisfied. Also, for two weeks in 1995, he had a chance to observe how things were done in the House of Ungaro.

"I went to Dubai to earn and save so one day I could put up my own shop here," says Divino. In 1997, he felt it was time, and decided to come home.

"Everyone was saying how bad a timing it was because of the Asian crisis," he recalls. "But I thought, I wasn't getting any younger. If I don't do it now, then when?"

Trusting his instincts, he put up a shop in BF Homes Parañaque. For five years now, it has quietly but steadily been doing good business with twentysomethings to more mature corporate mavens.

Then came the "presidential" offer.

Any newcomer would've quickly jumped at the chance to dress up the most powerful—and most photographed—woman of the land. This designer was different. He had reservations—not because he knew the President was frugal and, naturally, didn't mean big money.

"She's a public figure, and people tend to see only what's wrong and not what's good [with what she's wearing]," he explains.

True, he was used to designing for royalty, but his former clients in the Middle East were never as visible as the President. "I was afraid to make a mistake," he admits. But eventually he took up the offer.

Hardworking and organized

To dress up GMA, says Zapanta-Andrada, a designer shouldn't only be good; he should also be hardworking. She saw those qualities in Divino.

"He takes his work seriously and has no attitude problem. He doesn't mind redoing his work all over if he thinks it doesn't work... We've been getting nothing but compliments. I think I did the right thing," she says.

With a staff of seven, Divino personally manages his own business. "He's extremely organized," says Zapanta-Andrada. He drives himself to his appointments. Though he has a house in Cavite, home now is his shop, which he shares with his mother.

Divino is in charge of the President's evening formals and party dresses. (*Another designer, JC Buendia, also hand-picked by Zapanta-Andrada, creates GMA's suits. See PDI Lifestyle, 12/05/03.*)

Though extremely flattered that people mistake his work for known designers such as Salazar and Inno Sotto, Divino is determined to make his own unique mark. His designs are wearable, experimental but also timeless, he says.

"Rem has a sense of drama," Zapanta-Andrada notes. "He has dramatic ideas, but [considering he's working with the President] he also practices [creative] restraint."

On the petite-framed GMA, Divino makes sure not to use too many details. Good fabrics and simple beadwork are key. He uses striking colors like red, orange and peach for evening. The rules of thumb for the President are comfort and simplicity, but Divino is allowed some experimentation in beadings and some details "but still befitting her stature," he says.

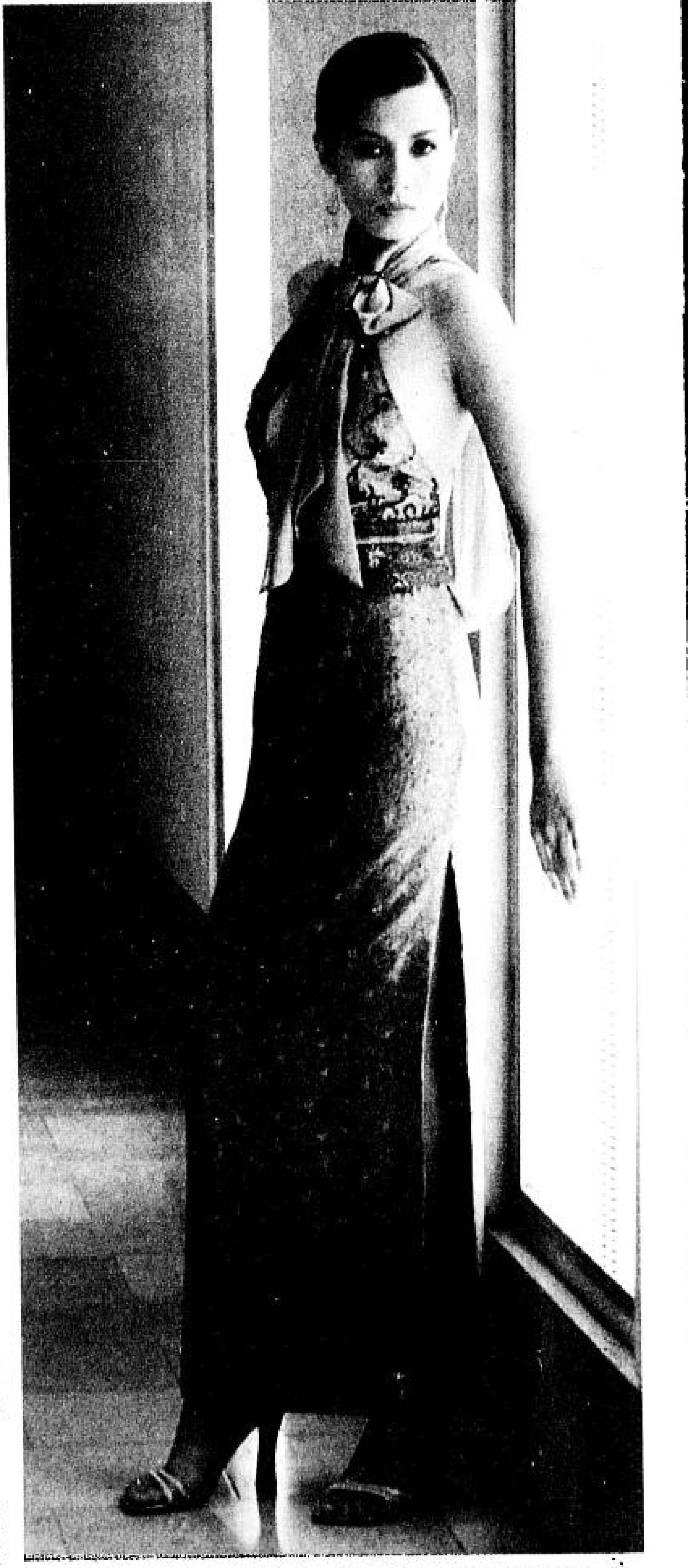
For US President George W. Bush's recent state visit, GMA's red-and-maroon terno sported different sleeves. She was initially apprehensive, but with a little prodding from the designer, she gave in.

"I'm really happy that she trusts me," says Divino. Whatever the results of next year's polls, he knows he has established a good working relationship with the President that would carry on come what may.

Labor of love

Divino also designs matching shoes and bags for some of the President's dresses. For long gowns, he goes as high as four inches, but with

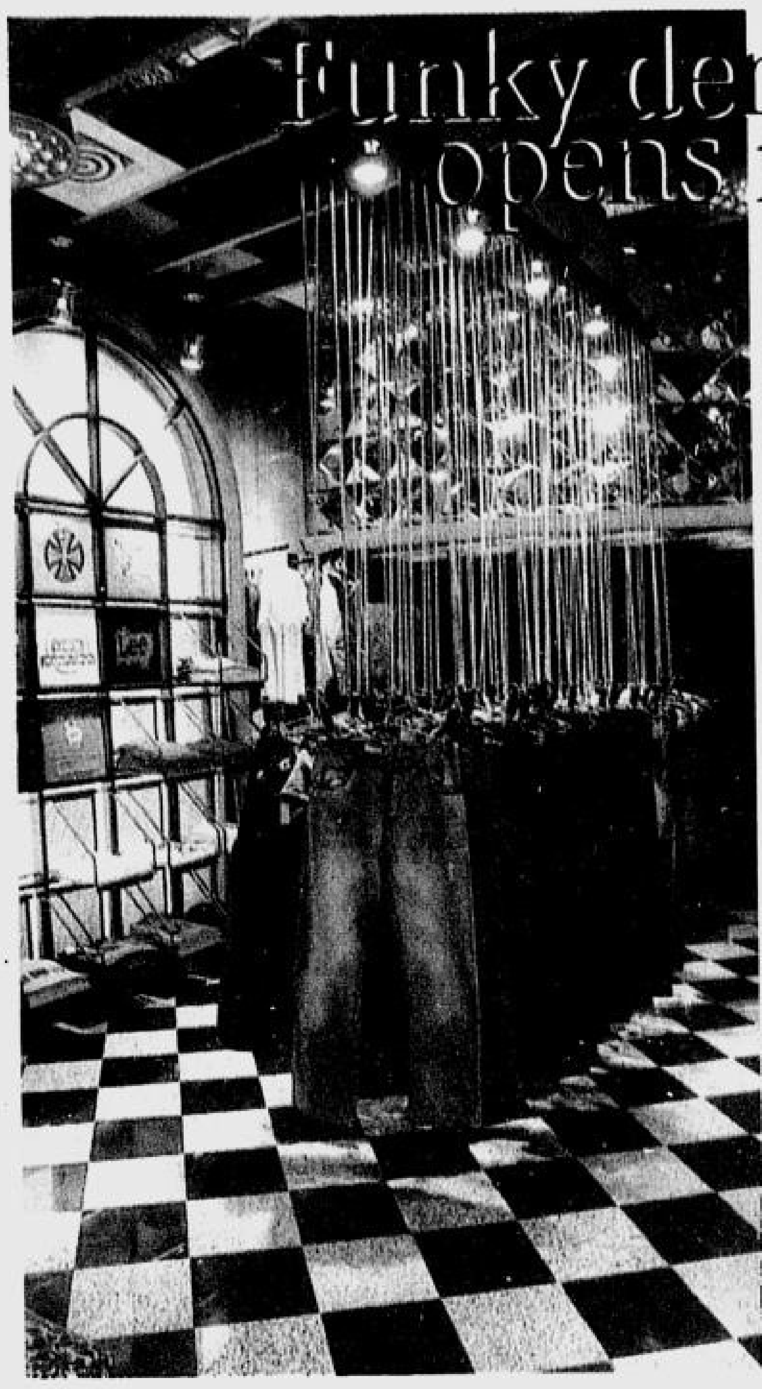
THE PRESIDENT'S/ C3



GREEN PIECE. Floral-print Indian silk evening gown with a fully beaded peekaboo halter top and chiffon draping at the back

AND TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND

Funky denim brand opens new store



LEE'S fashion philosophy of fusing archive influences with urban contemporary looks comes to life in its new store in Glorietta 2 at the heart of Makati.

Playfully funky, like walking into a cool rock star's pad, the store is peppered with unique details like vintage origami-inspired wallpaper, camouflage print furniture, colorful paper lamps and distressed painted wood with hard chrome metal details.

The interior is a mishmash of texture and style that showcases and combines Lee's traditional workwear heritage with the new and contemporary look of the times.

For denim aficionados, Lee Denim USA offers varied looks from stiff, vintage denim to tints and shine. This high-quality fabric is pounded with stones and either bleached, busted or enzymed.

The effect of being slashed, blasted, brushed, tinted or whiskered is what gives it the distinctive Lee Denim USA look and feel.

And with cool accessories and over-the-top Gola Classic shoes, denim lovers get the full Lee experience under one roof.

LEE Denim USA's new store in Glorietta 2, Makati, combines its traditional workwear heritage with more contemporary touches.

The President's . . .

From page C2

platform heels, following Zapanta-Andrada's specifications.

Presidential daughter Luli Arroyo is also a client. The younger woman's taste is even simpler, says the designer, but the equally petite Luli gets to borrow her mom's clothes and shoes, and vice versa, pleasing Divino no end.

The President is known for her thriftiness, so Divino and Buendia's works are a "labor of love," says Zapanta-Andrada. GMA has favored pieces, which she likes to wear on several occasions.

His association with the Palace has doubled his clientele in less than a year, admits the designer. But more than the renown, his "presidential" stint is a responsibility, says Divino.

By choice, he has been more discreet with his personal life, fearful that an unpleasant image may reflect badly on his client.

"It's more of an obligation," he says. "This is part of a cycle that may go away one day. I didn't ask for this, but since I've been entrusted with it, I may as well make the most of it."

E-mail the author at cmoral@inquirer.com:ph

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AQUATIC NYMPH. Stretch tulle evening gown with French silver lace on the bust and draping at the back

COLLEGE DIPLOMA
NILANG PINAPANGARAP, MATATANGGAP NA!

GMA

Rachelle V. Bassig Taloza
and baby Angel Dominique
#48 M. Hizon St. 10th Ave.
Kalookan City

Gloria B. Bolanoz
and baby Eunicko
La Trinidad St. Area B Group II
Brgy. Payatas, Quezon City

NORTH LUZON

Frances Therese R. Deligero
and baby Frederick Theodoro
B10 L76 Diapera St. Green Breeze II
City Land Subd., Pulong Buhangin
Sta. Maria, Bulacan

Bernadeth L. Orquia
and baby Jericah
#1453 Yakal St. 2 & 5 Subd.
Angeles City

SOUTH LUZON

Alelie C. Bamboa
and baby Glendel Mae
B. Tibayan St.
Ternate, Cavite

Luz Reyes
and baby Christian Joseph
Blk. 2 Lot 19 Ph 4 Guijo St.
Sorrento 2 Camella, Bacoor, Cavite

VISAYAS

Jenny B. Sabale
and baby Vanessa Jean
Brgy. Villa Anita Delgado St.
Iloilo City

Emily A. Aguilar
and baby Thistle Mariby
5 E. Lopez St.
Jaro, Iloilo City

MINDANAO

Emily S. Lozano
and baby Tracy
#3 Malasugue St. New Salmonan Agdao,
Davao City

Eliza Camarillo
and baby John Gabryle
94-A Fatima Village, Matina,
Davao City

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TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND TXT AND

Beauty booty for the New Year

J.Lo, Christy Turlington and even our own Fanny Serrano have come up with superb makeup lines

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

CHRISTMAS is over! At last we can buy things for ourselves again with no guilt involved! I go through this same time every year. There are of course those loved ones whom we still owe gifts to, so this article applies to them as well. These are my beauty finds for New Year.

Glow beauty kit by J.Lo. For all you J.Lo fanatics out there who ply me with e-mail like: "What makeup colors does she use?," well, this kit contains the answer to your questions. It has eye shadow duo, tinted lip gloss and shimmer and bronzer blush, plus a 50-ml Glow EDT. J.Lo herself was involved in formulating the colors, and yes, she wears them, too! These products are compatible with all skin tones, and prices have now dropped from P4,195 to P2,650. Believe it!

Fanny Serrano's makeup. What can TF (Tita Fanny) not do? He can style hair, transform anyone into a goddess with flawless makeup application, even move us with his acting performances.

Now this top stylist to Filipina celebrities has created his own makeup line, so anyone can wear the same colors that the likes of Sharon Cuneta and Lorna Tolentino do. Among the items I have tried are Great powder textures (blush and eye shadows) and colors—I got amethyst eye shadow and Sun Bronze Blush. There are nice pencil products, too (lip liner and eye pencils).

Have yet to try the foundation and concealer and find a lipstick shade I can use. I am acidic, so everything turns orange! Aside from the brushes, nothing goes above P500, and everything comes in cool rubber packaging. Available at Serrano's boutique at 69 Scout Rallos St., Tomas Morato, QC.

Jean Paul Gaultier's Fragile. Shine like a star in Gaultier' s Shimmering body oil, shimmering body balm, body lotion and perfume. The kit comes in the sexiest gothic packaging there is in the market, and the shimmer accentuates one's dangerous curves (cleavage, legs and shoulders).

If you can't have everything, try the body oil and body balm. These are the musts.

Post-holiday skin rejuvenators. How does "holiday problem skin" look? Dehydrated, chapped, dull, grayish, tight, breaks out in spots and prone to increased pigmentation.

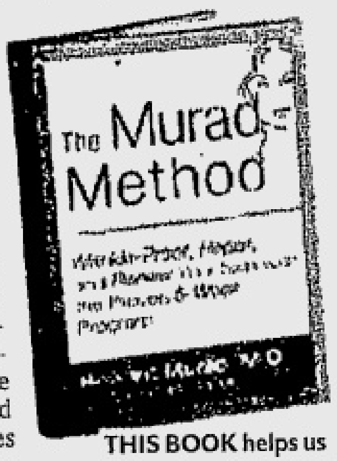
JENNIFER Lopez's beauty secret is revealed through Glow by J.Lo, her best-selling cosmetics line.

To counter this, try Phytomer's White Eclat gift sets. Radiate with Snow Queen, revitalize with Fresh Fatale, purify with Pristine Angel and detoxify with Marine Man. Check out Rustan's counters and consult with its trained specialists to find out which is best for you.

The Murad Method Book. Dr. Howard Murad helps us understand the aging process of our skin better by describing things in layman's terms. By the time you finish reading his book, you can determine which specific combination of his products is fit for you and understand why everyone, even the very oily, will benefit from moisturizer.

Murad's celebrity fans include Brooke Shields, Calista Flockhart and Lucy Liu.

Sundari, by supermodel Christy Turlington. Once an avid smoker, Turlington did a 180-degree lifestyle change and went all-out healthy. After trying out yoga, she co-founded Sundari, a skin care line based on the principles of Ayurveda (an East Indian science), which teaches that the balancing of mind, body and spirit will lead us to peace, harmony and lasting beauty.



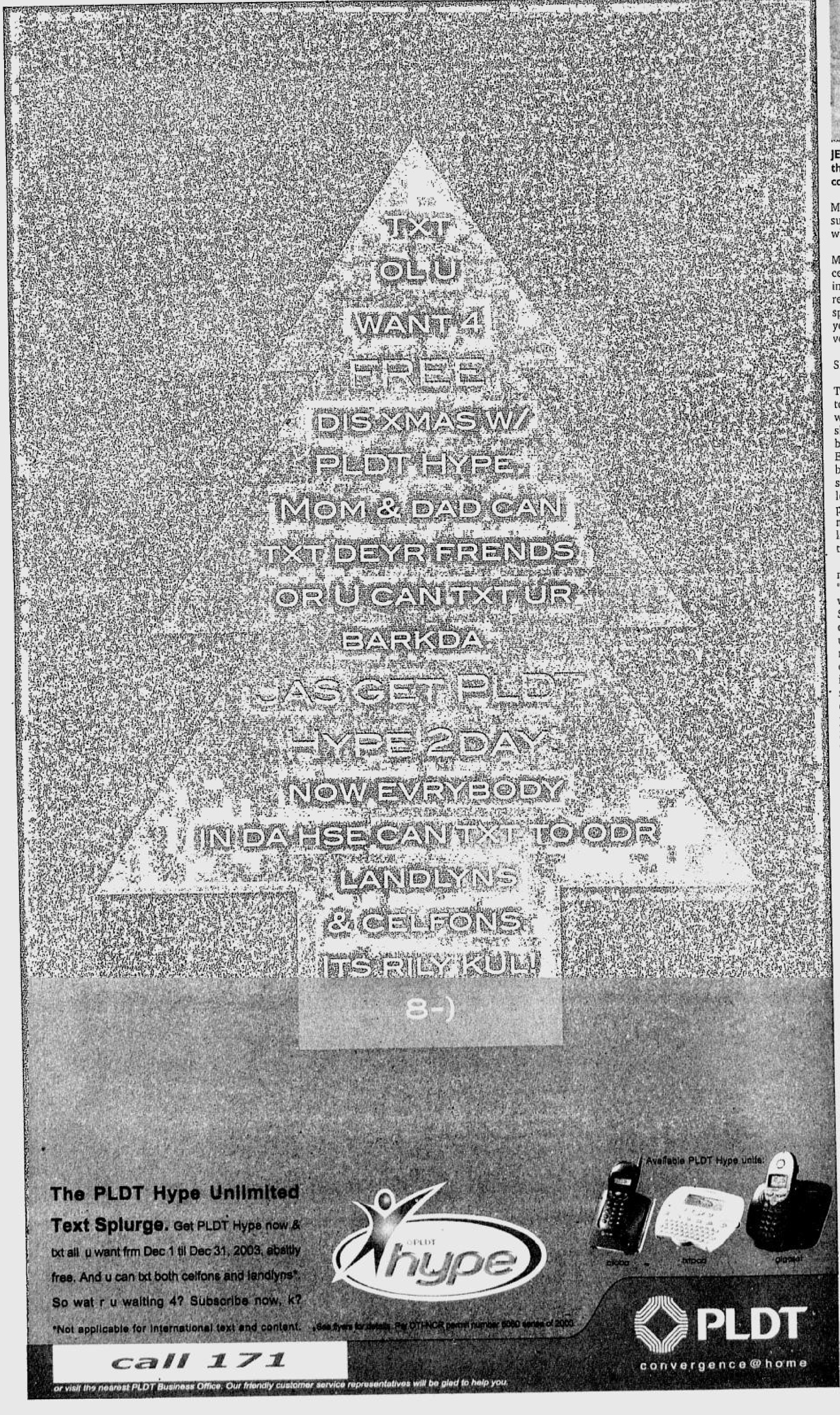
THIS BOOK helps us understand the skin's aging process.

Sundari, meaning "beautiful woman" in Sanskrit, has only 20 products. It eliminates the use of toners and instead uses skin oil after cleansing. The product which has gained a cult following (and also the most expensive one) is the Nighttime nourishing oil (P4,950) for mature/dry skin which lasts for four months.

Visit www.sundari.com or drop by Rustan's Essences. You can take the test to check if you have a Vata (dry skin), Pitta (normal/combination) or Kapha (oily). Those who believe in aromatherapy will appreciate this line, as it uses the same oils for healing, mood enhancement and treatment. Lovers of lavender will especially love the smell of Neem—the East Indian counterpart in scent and properties.

Watercolors promo. Fans of Watercolors salon on West Avenue will be glad to know that it now has a branch in Annapolis Greenhills. To celebrate its opening, all hair treatments are 50-percent off while foot spas are 30-percent off until January. My hairstylist and rebonding expert, Val de la Fuente, is there every Tuesday and Friday. Call 410-1219.

SEXY GOTH. Jean Paul Gaultier's Fragile


TXT
OL U
WANT 4
FREE
DIS XMAS W/
PLDT HYPE.
MOM & DAD CAN
TXT DEYR FRENDS
OR U CAN TXT UR
BARKDA.
JAS GET PLDT
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Archbishop Rosales defines 'development'

ARCHBISHOP Gaudencio B. Rosales

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

I'VE always wondered why "development" in this country is often accompanied by destruction. There must be ways and means to undertake development projects without causing havoc on the environment.

There must be appropriate technology, for instance, to extract minerals and other resources from our forests and mountains without denuding them or, after the work is done, letting the area go to waste.

The unsustainable practices have resulted in discontent among people in those project areas and, worse, in an entire nation. Their natural resources already despoiled, people must suffer the consequences of a ravaged environment—erosion, floods, even disease.

Even as we lament such destruction, we realize we need to develop our natural resources—for infrastructure, for buildings and houses, the economy and the everyday needs of the people who rely on the products of "development."

The world's environmentalists, who convened in Earth Summits (in Rio in 1992 and South Africa last August) to discuss environmental problems affecting the planet, sought to find a meeting ground between the needs of both development and conservation.

What they discussed, "Sustainable Development," was even the theme of the last meeting. The term means that any "development" must have the ability to continue for a long time so that its benefits can be enjoyed not only by this generation but also by future ones. If it cannot do that, clearly it is not sustainable, and should not be allowed to operate at all.

Fortunately, in the midst of such questions, we came across a new definition of development that attaches a spiritual dimension in reconciling the two poles of development and conservation. It seemed appropriate that the redefinition would come during this most spiritual of seasons, and from one known as an environmental activist among the clergy—Archbishop Gaudencio B. Rosales, newly installed Archbishop of Manila.

For him, reconciliation can begin only by first redefining terms. Since development of natural resources usually involves needs and desires, it should be clear "that one person's desires must not be allowed to nullify another individual's essential needs." Should that happen, "then development models must, of necessity, tread the moral path and not simply the technical route."

To stress his point, the archbishop uses one word that says it all—avarice. "Both for nations and for individual men, avarice is the most evident form of underdevelopment." It suggests that avarice (call it greed) is behind a lot of so-called "development" work.

Archbishop Rosales expressed these views in his keynote speech during the Seminar-Workshop on Community Foundations organized by Chevron-Texaco through its subsidiary Caltex Phil. which, with non-government organizations, sponsors community-based projects, many of them environmental.

It will be recalled that in Lipa City, his posting before Manila, Archbishop Rosales founded and chaired Pondong Batangan, a community foundation that became such a success, it had become a model for that type of foundation. It became a success because it dared to be different.

And it was different because the archbishop injected his philosophy of true development that went beyond the conventional meaning of "sustainable development," which is "meeting the needs of the present generation with resources at hand without sacrificing the resources of the next generation."

Archbishop Rosales saw the limitation of this definition. It was set down, he said, by technology and the ways of men, and spurred by their needs and desires. But, he noted, needs and desires differed from one person to another, and they might even negate each other.

The archbishop cited the case of two groups of people, one praying for good weather because they were hosting a garden party, and another group nearby praying for rain so their crops would grow. Could conflicting desires also become the reconciliation of many efforts toward the development of people and community building?

Archbishop Rosales said it was possible but development for people would have to be redefined. "One person's desire must never be allowed to nullify another individual's needs."

And there lies the crux of the controversy. The archbishop, true man to his calling, thinks of sustainable development in terms of equitable benefits that would alleviate poverty and conserve our natural resources. Development, he believes, must benefit not one but all, including the environment itself.

Does this not explain why illegal logging, destructive fishing methods and other manifestations of lack of environmental regard, only lead to misery, even death, for many, while enriching a few? Perhaps in this season of hope, it might be timely to ponder on this.

Archbishop Rosales has been engaged in environmental work for some time, starting from his days in Cotabato, which inspired him to write a book in memory of a priest in his diocese, Fr. Neri Satur who, as forest officer of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, gave his life defending the forests. More on this next time.

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com

New head of Manila's archdiocese is staunch environmentalist

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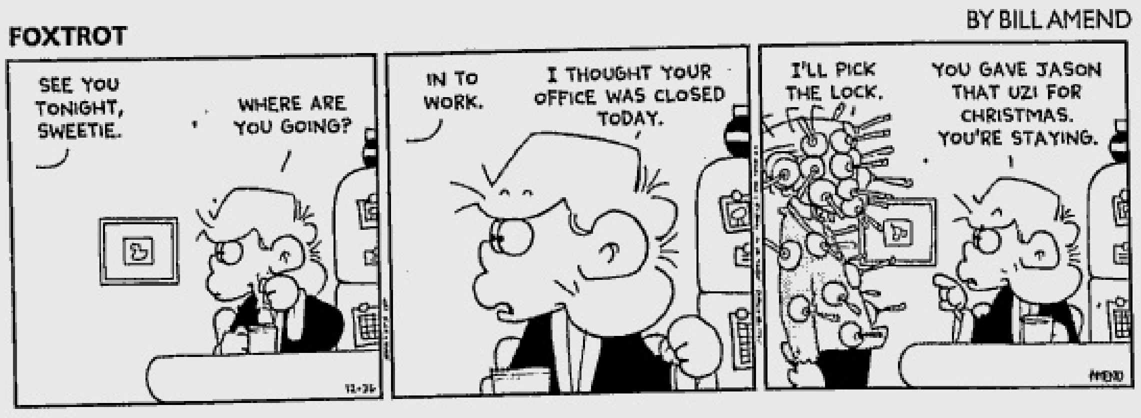
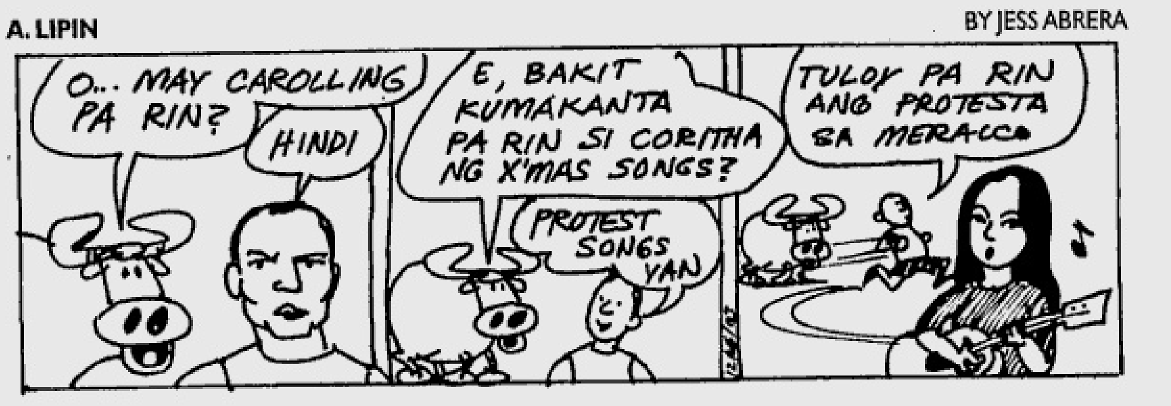
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


SEE YOU TONIGHT, SWEETIE.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
IN TO WORK.
I THOUGHT YOUR OFFICE WAS CLOSED TODAY.
I'LL PICK THE LOCK.
YOU GAVE JASON THAT UZI FOR CHRISTMAS. YOU'RE STAYING.
12-26
AMEND

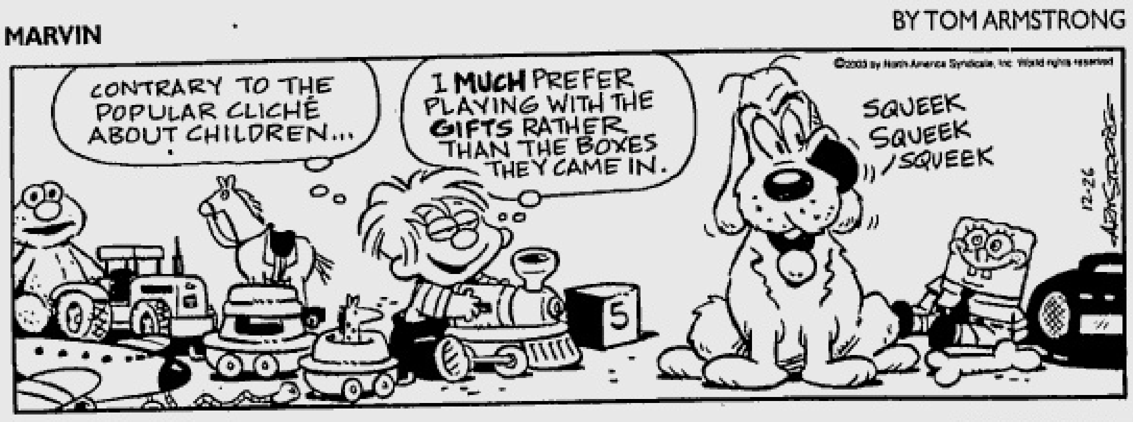
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O... MAY CAROLLING PA RIN?
HINDI
E, BAKIT KUMAKANTA PA RIN SI CORITHA NG X'MAS SONGS?
PROTEST SONGS YAN
TULOY PA RIN ANG PROTESTA SA MERALCO

MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG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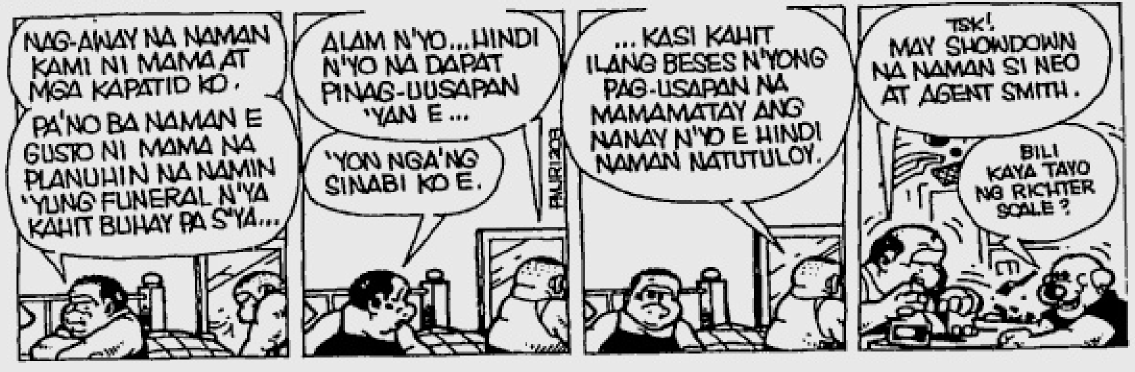
CONTRARY TO THE POPULAR CLICHÉ ABOUT CHILDREN...
I MUCH PREFER PLAYING WITH THE GIFTS RATHER THAN THE BOXES THEY CAME IN.
SQUEEK SQUEEK SQUEEK
12-26
ARMSTRONG
5

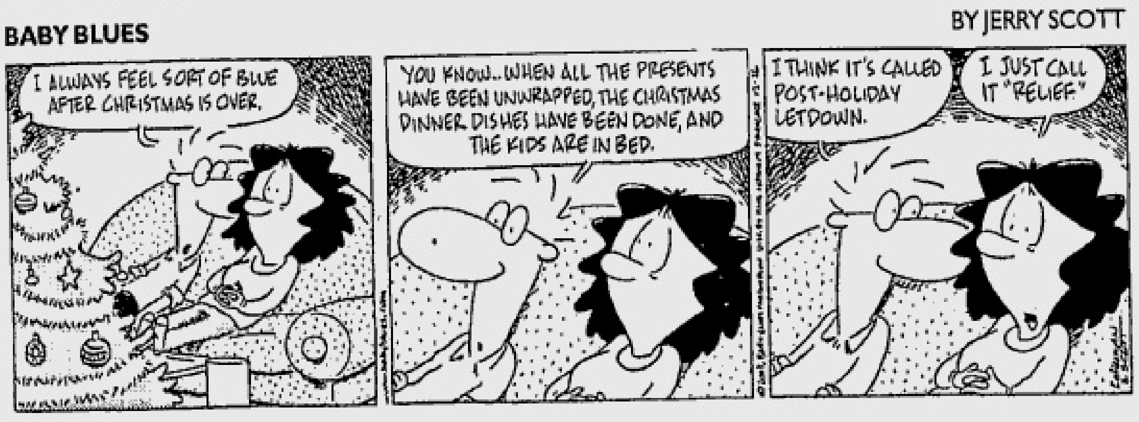
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NAG-AWAY NA NAMAN KAMI NI MAMA AT MGA KAPATID KO.
PA'NO BA NAMAN E GUSTO NI MAMA NA PLANUHIN NA NAMIN 'YUNG FUNERAL N'YA KAHIT BUHAY PA S'YA...
ALAM N'YO... HINDI N'YO NA DAPAT PINAG-UUSAPAN 'YAN E...
'YON NGA'NG SINABI KO E.
... KASI KAHIT ILANG BESES N'YONG PAG-USAPAN NA MAMAMATAY ANG NANAY N'YO E HINDI NAMAN NATUTULOY.
TSK! MAY SHOWDOWN NA NAMAN SI NEO AT AGENT SMITH.
BILI KAYA TAYO NG RICHTER SCALE?

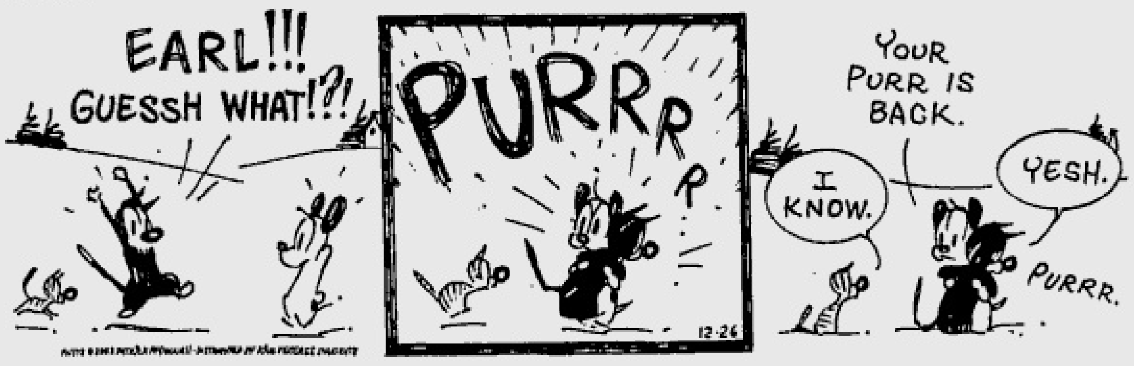
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


I ALWAYS FEEL SORT OF BLUE AFTER CHRISTMAS IS OVER.
YOU KNOW... WHEN ALL THE PRESENTS HAVE BEEN UNWRAPPED, THE CHRISTMAS DINNER DISHES HAVE BEEN DONE, AND THE KIDS ARE IN BED.
I THINK IT'S CALLED POST-HOLIDAY LETDOWN.
I JUST CALL IT "RELIEF."

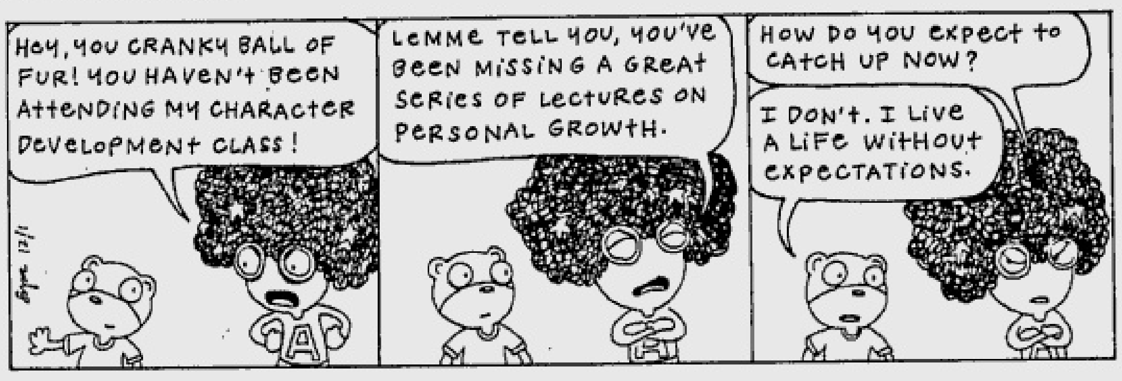
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


EARL!!!
GUESSH WHAT!?!
PURRR R
YOUR PURR IS BACK.
I KNOW.
YESH.
PURRR.
12-26

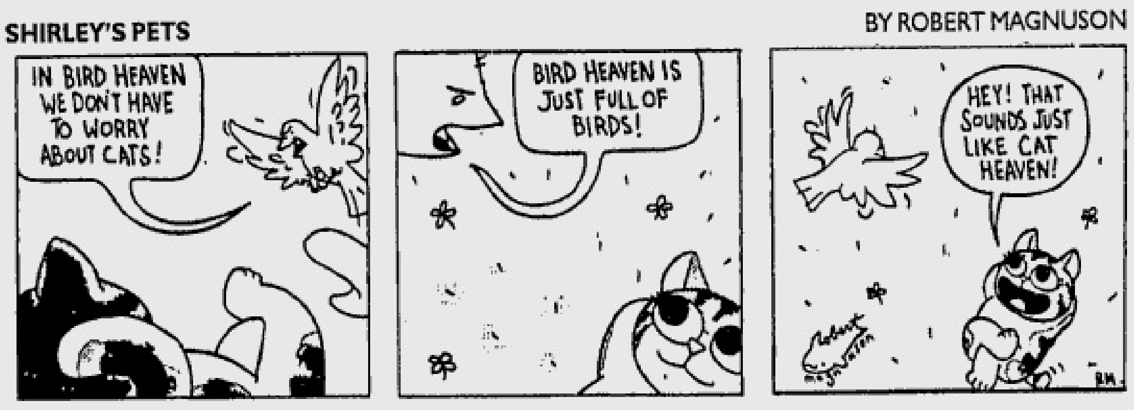
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


HEY, YOU CRANKY BALL OF FUR! YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ATTENDING MY CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT CLASS!
LEMME TELL YOU, YOU'VE BEEN MISSING A GREAT SERIES OF LECTURES ON PERSONAL GROWTH.
HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO CATCH UP NOW?
I DON'T. I LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS.
A

SHIRLEY'S PETS

BY ROBERT MAGNUSON


IN BIRD HEAVEN WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT CATS!
BIRD HEAVEN IS JUST FULL OF BIRDS!
HEY! THAT SOUNDS JUST LIKE CAT HEAVEN!
Robert Magnuson
RM.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are persevering, determined and cautious. Your methodical nature allows you to cover all bases. You do not give up: Nothing daunts you. You enjoy good times and can weather tough times as well. The year ahead might be one of the most powerful years of your life. Your cherished dreams can come true! **Birthdate of:** Jared Leto, actor; Richard Widmark, actor; Charles Babbage, inventor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You feel surprisingly sure of yourself today. (Of course, you feel this way quite often.) You won't hesitate to speak your mind to authority figures and parents.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Certain issues from the past, or issues with individuals who live far away, are your primary concern today. Go after what you want because your determination brings you success.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Your ability to persuade anyone to agree with you (especially about shared property) is stunning today! Nobody has a chance once you start talking.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Conversations with partners and close friends are definitely lively today. Each party wants to convince the other about something. (Make sure you listen to what others have to say.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You're ready to read the riot act at work today. You have strong ideas about what needs to be done, and you're certainly not afraid to speak up.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Trust your creative impulses today. You're in touch with your personal muse. All your ideas are worth consideration. Write them down or share them with others.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Exchanges with parents and family members might be intense today. Don't come on too strong. (You are very convincing, which is why many Librans are in the legal profession.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Today you can influence, teach, explain, sell, market, convince and persuade with enormous skill. No one can resist you right now! (Go easy on the little people.)

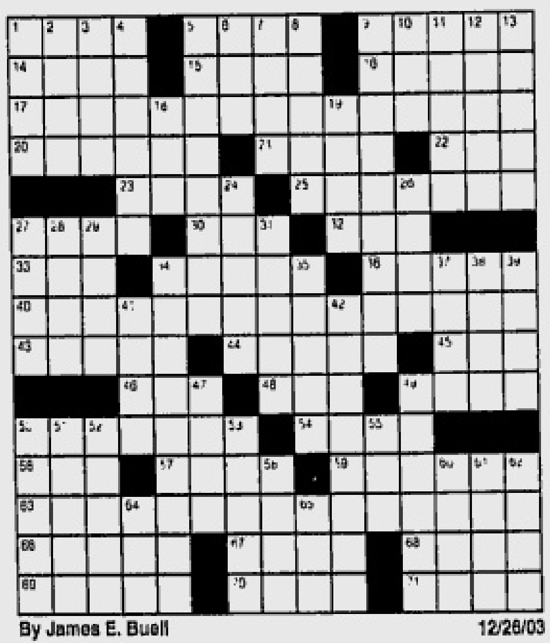
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're extremely powerful at work today. Similarly, you're extremely hot if you go shopping! You'll make a beeline directly for whatever you want. (And you'll get it.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): With both the Sun and Mercury in your sign now, you're unusually erudite and well-spoken. Your powers of persuasion are so strong you're like the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Use today to research anything that you want to know. Suddenly, you see the subtext of things. You seem to see everything that's going on beneath the surface. (Wear your deerstalker.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Don't let somebody talk you into doing something that you don't want to do. You seem to attract real pushy types to you today. These friends are well meaning; nevertheless, you're directing your own movie.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL
12/26/03

ACROSS
1 Goof off
5 Go gunning for
9 Grips
14 Mayberry boy
15 Field
16 Regarding
17 Canoeist's concern
20 Barnstorming
21 Realtor's sign
22 Schedule abbr.
23 Stanton film, "__ Man"
25 Recent
27 Eban of Israel
30 Under the weather
32 Score of zero
33 __ Paulo, Brazil
34 Nepal's neighbor
36 Juicy fruit
40 Pilot's concern
43 God of the Koran
44 Bucks in Brussels
45 Young bloke
46 Handle clumsily
48 Go get 'em!
49 Puts in stitches
50 Nit-picker
54 Similar (to)
56 Reproductive cells
57 Fringe benefit
59 Denounce fiercely
63 Rallyist's concern
66 Not native
67 Dynamic leader?
68 "Damn Yankees" vamp
69 Goes the distance
70 Act of faith?
71 Check

DOWN
1 Gray wolf
2 Throw back the bolt
3 Isn't wrong?
4 Rakish hat
5 Do holders
6 Coffee vessel
7 Court partitions
8 Nevada resort
9 Pickles and jams?
10 Kimono tie
11 Significant other
12 As a result of
13 Stable bedding
18 Seek damages
19 Joie de vivre
24 Smash from the past
26 Feline weapon
27 Hammett terrier
28 Turn on the waterworks
29 Quiver with rage
31 "Peanuts" character
34 C'est la vie
35 Open courtyards
37 River of Thebes
38 Do beaver work
39 Likelihood
41 Easy marks
42 Exchange business?
47 Troubles
49 Traffic tieups
50 __ point (center of activity)
51 Soft palate part
52 Draped garments
53 Pilot program
55 Witt's surface
58 Cap or pad starter
60 Blow one's horn
61 Hearty partner
62 Mild yellow cheese
64 Ex-GI
65 Singing syllable

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

D	E	A	L	T	■	G	I	S	T	■	C	A	M	P
E	L	S	I	E	■	R	O	T	C	■	A	L	O	E
A	S	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N	■	L	O	U	T
R	E	P	O	M	A	N	■	B	E	C	A	U	S	E
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E	D	I	T	■	A	S	A	P	P	L	E	P	I	E
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F	R	E	D	■	P	R	E	S	■	N	I	C	E	R

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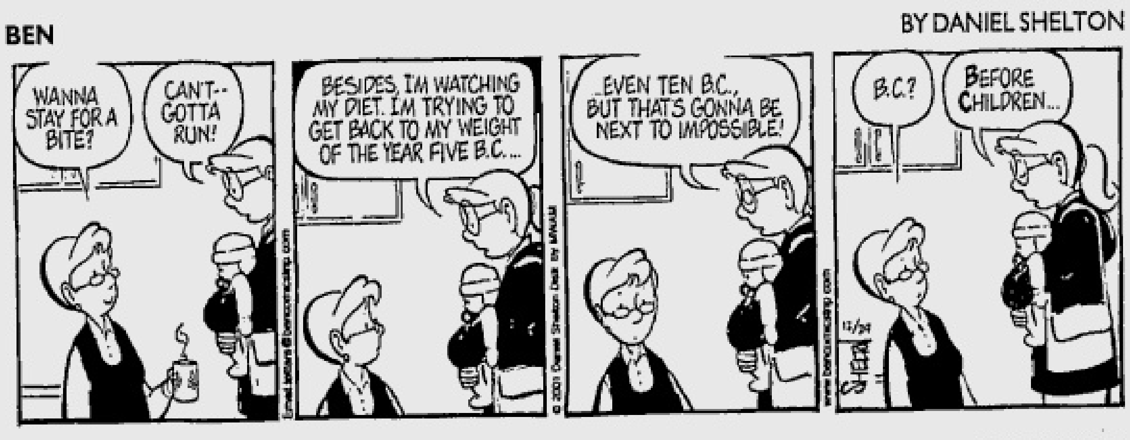
12/26/03

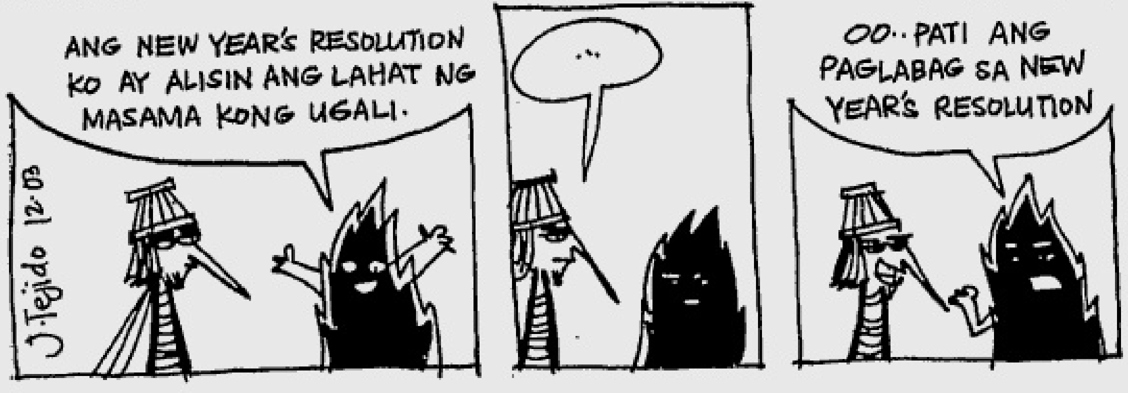
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WANNA STAY FOR A BITE?
CAN'T-- GOTTA RUN!
BESIDES, I'M WATCHING MY DIET. I'M TRYING TO GET BACK TO MY WEIGHT OF THE YEAR FIVE B.C....
...EVEN TEN B.C., BUT THAT'S GONNA BE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE!
B.C.?
BEFORE CHILDREN...
SHELTON

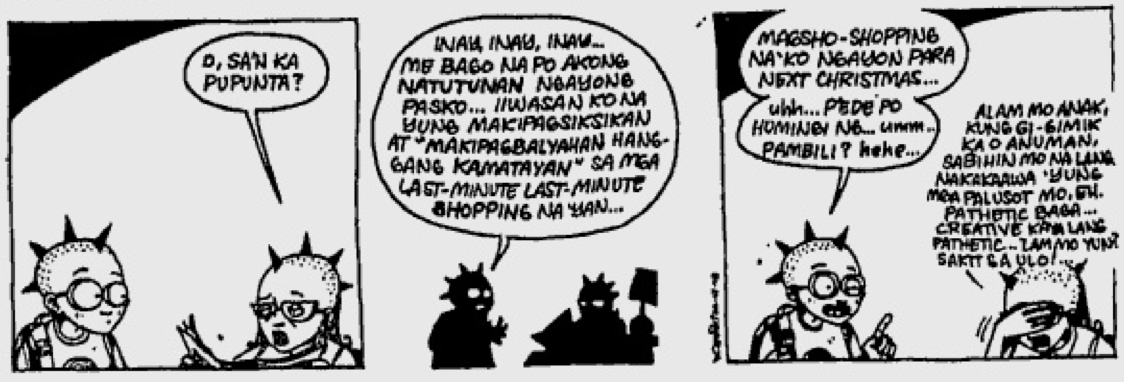
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANG NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION KO AY ALISIN ANG LAHAT NG MASAMA KONG UGALI.
J. Tejido 12.03
...
OO.. PATI ANG PAGLABAG SA NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

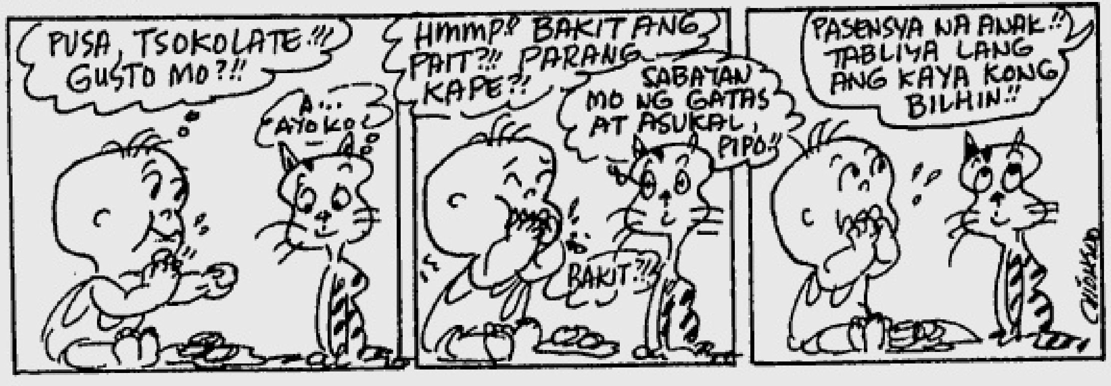
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


O, SAN KA PUPUNTA?
INAY, INAY, INAY... MEI BAGO NA PO AKONG NATUTUNAN NGAYONG PASKO... IIWASAN KO NA YUNG MAKIPAGSIKSIKAN AT "MAKIPAGBALYAHAN HANGGANG KAMATAYAN" SA MGA LAST-MINUTE LAST-MINUTE SHOPPING NA YAN...
MAGSHO-SHOPPING NA'KO NGAYON PARA NEXT CHRISTMAS...
uhh... PEDE PO HUMINGI NG... umm.. PAMBILI? hehe...
ALAM MO ANAK, KUNG GI-GIMIK KA O ANUMAN, SABIHIN MO NA LANG NAKAKAHIYA 'YUNG MGA PALUSOT MO, EH. PATHETIC BAGA... CREATIVE KA NA LANG PATHETIC... 'LAM MO YUN? SAKIT SA ULO!

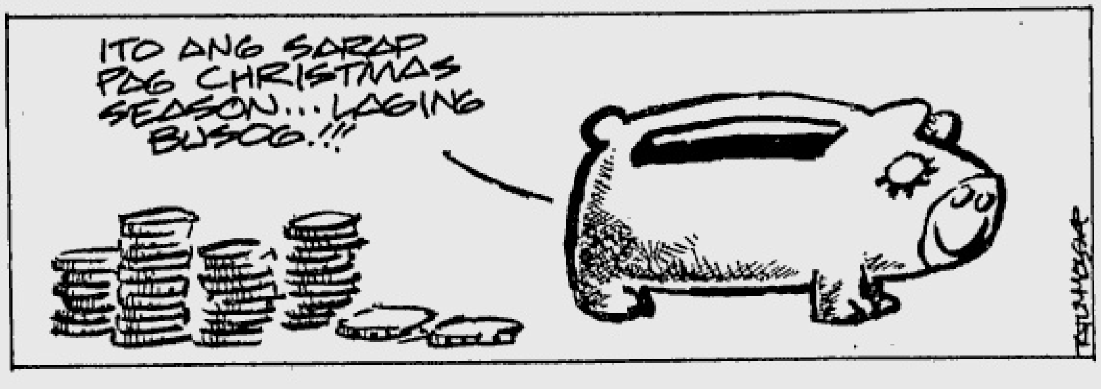
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PUSA, TSOKOLATE!?! GUSTO MO?!!
A... AYOKO!
HMMP?! BAKIT ANG PAIT?!! PARANG KAPE?!!
SABAYAN MO NG GATAS AT ASUKAL, PIPO!!
BAKIT?!!
PASENSYA NA ANAK!! TABLIYA LANG ANG KAYA KONG BILHIN!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ITO ANG SARAP PAG CHRISTMAS SEASON... LAGING BUSOG.!!!

RADIANCE condo living room. A luxurious home theater set-up accented with a glass-topped, silver-framed coffee table with a curved, modern design

THE CHIC in the City kitchen concept, good for a 24-36 sq m condo unit, need not have small-time furniture and appliances.

Two home brands team up for small space showcase

LIMITED space need not be a problem for comfortable and stylish living. With the right design and a wisely planned floor area, condo living or small spaces can work for you. Creative home ideas can make practical living fun.

As a response to this growing trend, Blims Fine Furniture, one of the country's leading makers of fine furniture, teamed up with top electronics brand Panasonic at the Furniture Fashion Forecast exhibit held recently at the SM Megamall and presented new ideas on how to make small spaces work.

With the help of Hubilla Design Group, two concepts were presented at the exhibit—the Radiance and Chic in the City vignettes.

The Radiance vignette was meant to reflect the radiance of two people in love, while the Chic in the City concept was designed for single, cosmopolitan women.

The areas were well-defined and maximized without compromising taste by putting in no-nonsense furniture. While minimally adorned, furnishings and accents were all in the right places.

Providing the highlight to these designs were classy, hi-tech Panasonic appliances such as the TV and Home Theater system, refrigerator, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, etc., which heightened the "urban chic" atmosphere of the studio.

Also supporting the exhibit showcases were Bobby Novenario with his Holiday Collection; Interior Design Options and the Living Well with accessories; Denovo's cabinets; gas ranges by Elba; paint by Boysen; ornamental plants by Berde Plants; bed linen by Sheridan; carpets by Tai-ping; and tiles by Mariwasa and Puyat Vinyl.

Panasonic recently launched a unified brand for all its products, positioning itself as a global brand.

This will be followed by a global campaign with the new slogan, "Panasonic—ideas for life."

Under the new global brand strategy, the brand name for all home appliance products in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and China will be changed from "National" to "Panasonic" by the end of March 2004.

The "National" brand will, however, continue to be used in Japan where it originated.

DION sofa bed by Blims

RADIANCE bedroom set-up. Blims comfy bed with Majestic Home Theater system

MULTI-PHOTO box

Organize your life

MAKEROOM has new household aids for fuss-free living.

Make your den an intelligent workspace with dependable memory and powerful organizing capabilities with Stretch Memo Board. With an elastic lacing that could hold handwritten agendas and notes, the state-of-the-art memo board could be mounted or easeled with a sturdy wooden backing.

With the self-draining compact dish rack, you don't have to worry about dropping those plates while drying them. Lightweight and compact, the rack can hold spoons, forks and other cutlery. The Compact Dish Rack can also be folded in half and stored if not needed.

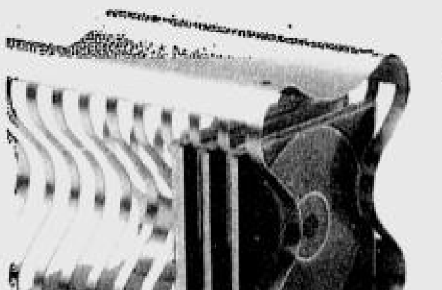
The Cello Soap Pump gives you easy access to soap when bathing. You can even add steam with the Vapor Tumbler and Soap Pump.

Keep paper towel and toilet paper neat and tidy with the Teardrop Paper Towel Holder and the Teardrop Toilet Paper Stand.

The Multi-Photo Box, with luxuriously lacquered wood finish and glass fittings, allows you to put six photos in one stylish box-type frame.

Organize your music collection with Make Room's stackable aluminum Groove CD Rack.

MakeRoom, owned and operated by Stores Specialists Inc., is located at the Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center.



GROOVE CD rack

School marks 25th year

ST. Paul School of Aparri, batch '78, is celebrating its 25th silver anniversary on Dec. 27 at the school's quadrangle. Call Richard Alvarado at 4935198.

STOP

UNSIGHTLY, UNHEALTHY, UNSAFE

MOULDS, ALGAE

FUNGI.

Moulds, algae and other fungi can trigger asthma, allergies and other respiratory ailments. When they create a slippery footing, they may even cause accidents like slips and falls.

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AFTER

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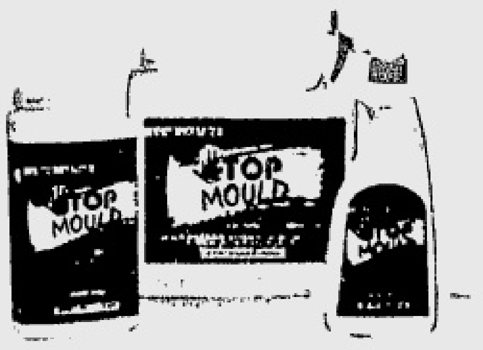
- With Stop Mould, there's no regrowth for at least 6 months, unlike other cleaning agents.



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2nd Prize:
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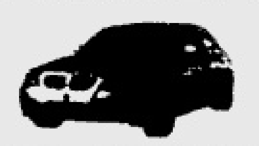

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Send us via MMS those special moments captured using your celfone's digital camera and you could win cash or MMS-capable Nokia celfones.

To join, simply Click-Create-and-Send your best original MMS photo message based on the following themes:

December 14, 2003 to January 4, 2004 - Bloopers
December 29, 2003 to January 25, 2004 - Barkada Moments
January 26, 2004 to February 22, 2004 - Family Fun

You can send in your entries anytime on the given timeframe.
Judging will start the next day after the last day of submission of entries.

You can also share the fun with your friends because all entries can be downloaded and forwarded!

To view all entries, just visit the SMART WAP site.

**Only pictures taken with a camera phone (built-in or attached) are valid as entries for this contest.*

1 To get started: key in GOTU and send to 373

2 To register: key in REG <NAME/ADDRESS> and send to 373

The SMART Got ü! MMS Photo Contest is open to:

SMART GOLD Simply The Gold Life · SMART Buddy pre-paid · addict · TALK 'N TEXT

Here's how to create your MMS entry:

3
Click
Use your celfone's digital camera to take pictures.

Create
Compose an MMS message by adding text to the picture you took.

Send
Send composed multimedia photo message to 373.

In case your MMS hasn't been activated yet, send MMS to 211.

SMART
Simply Amazing!

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or e-mail us at pr_lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

Trend Spotting

A GORGEOUSLY bald Max Brenner shows off his favorite chocolate

BUSINESS magnate Dante Morales, Max Brenner choco bar biggie Arnold Co, and gorgeous Vicky Morales Reyno with her mother, Lou Morales

Life can also be like a bar, Forrest Gump

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by
Alex Van Hagen
on Kodak Max

IT was like unwrapping a new bar of chocolate for all of us, *palanggas*, when the one-of-a-kind **Max Brenner** Chocolate Bar threw open its chocolate doors, at Greenbelt 3, Makati (facing Makati Avenue).

The happening got rolling with a ceremonial parade where everyone got choco-loco as Max Brenner descended Greenbelt 3's stairs, carrying a huge bowl of chocolate fondue and dipping his fingers in it like a kid recklessly enjoying the yummy chocolates.

Alongside Max, carrying marshmallows, fresh strawberries, apricots, cherries and grapes from Australia for the fondue ceremony were hotshot snazzy personalities—MTV VJ KC **Montero**, witty television host **Boy Abunda**, top DJ **Manolet Dario** and macho model **Paolo Cabalfin.**

It was chocolate, chocolate and more chocolate during the night, dahlings, as the bar's waiters all wore chocolate brown aprons and, like Max, had shaven heads.

To have a taste of this exquisitely new chocolate culture, Cosmo Manille's mega chocolate addicts swarmed into this newest bar—Metropolitan Museum dedicated woman **Bea Zobel Jr.**; Chocolate Bar franchise owners, beautiful enterprising couple, always with a smile **Arnold Co** and planner, **Ruth Velasco Co**; working socialites and chocolate die-hards **Margarita Delgado, Mia Borromeo, Anna Buenaventura** and **Vicky Zubiri**; young Rustan's bright designer **Hindi Weber Tantoco**. Other namedroppables included **Lovely Romulo** and daughter **Mons, Francis** and **Mary Anne Lumen, Becca Dosch, Debbie Tan, Peggy Ty, Toni Leviste, Maike Evers**, Ayala's **Rowena Tomeldan** and **Winnie Nazareth, Raul Manzano, Louie Ysmael, Karen Santos, Vicky Morales**, restaurateurs **Jessie Sincioco** and **Gaita Fores, Emily Lopez, Patrick Rosas** and other chocolate fanatics, dahlings.

Highlighting the event was Max's unveiling of the big chocolate machine, the heart of Max Brenner's Chocolate Bar.

Introducing a new chocolate culture for us Filipinos, the "bald man," as he is fondly called by chocolate lovers, demonstrated the "suckao" (from the words, "suck" and "ca-

LIFE/ E3

onstage 2nyt

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LAS PIÑAS ☎ 801.7644	FAT 16 CRO MAGNON	OPEN FROM 6PM TO 5AM NO ENTRANCE FEE
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Celebrating Christmas with
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and Novellino
ITALIAN WINES
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Activity Area, LGF
SM City FAIRVIEW
DEC 28 • 4pm
Entertainment Plaza, 5/F
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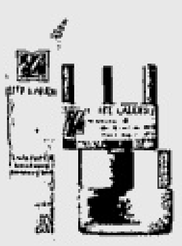
New lift, new life. Day and night.

Resilience Lift and Resilience Lift OverNight
In mid-life skin, hormonal fluctuations and dehydration lower collagen production. These ultra-hydrating formulas work around the clock to help collagen rebuild itself to leave skin looking and acting years younger. Less lined. Firmer feeling. Lifted and radiant.

Resilience Lift Face and Throat Creme SPF 15
30ml ₱2,600; 50ml ₱3,650
Resilience Lift OverNight Face and Throat Creme
30ml ₱2,850; 50ml ₱4,150

New. Resilience Lift Extra-Firming Revitalizing Mask
In just 10 minutes, it tones, lifts and firms tired, slackened skin. Plumps skin from within with vital moisture and leaves it radiantly renewed. 75ml ₱2,400



Your free gift
Receive a 3-pc gift with the purchase of Resilience Lift Mask or ₱3,000 and above:
- Resilience Lift Extra-Firming Revitalizing Mask 15ml
- Resilience Lift OverNight Face and Throat Creme 7ml
- Resilience Lift Face and Throat Creme SPF 15 7ml

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RED-HOT NUMBER. Long overcoat goes on top of sari bandeau top and short leather skirt; thigh-high boots lend perfect balance.

SLEEK AND CHIC. Hollywood-ish gown with daring front slit and beadwork accent

EVENING STAR. Navy column gown with draped low neckline touched with one-sided beadwork

NIGHT GODDESS. Haltered column gown with heavily beaded waistband accent

MOD ELEGANCE. Fur-trimmed white see-through lace top paired with slim pants and printed long overskirt

BLACK 'N WHITE. Lace column gown with low neckline enhanced by black bead fringes and fur swagger accent

A night of car-inspired fashion

Eddie Baddeo comes up with a 17-piece collection inspired by the qualities of Hyundai's three new car models

DESIGNER Eddie Baddeo came up with a fabulous 17-piece collection inspired by characteristics and qualities of each new car model Hyundai Asia Resources Inc., the country's official Hyundai distributor, recently introduced to the market—the Coupe, Sonata and XG.

The glittering and glamorous event, held at the Ballroom of the Westin Philippine Plaza, gathered together the top men and women of Hyundai and car dealers and aficionados from all over the country to celebrate the launch of these three new cars.

The show started with the fast and sporty Coupe collection. Baddeo transposed these qualities to fashion with racy and edgy numbers rendered in flirtatious red. Exotic *sari* fabrics and luxurious leather short skirts blended with daring halters and sexy abbreviated tops touched with fur accent. Long overcoats in colorful flannel gave warmth, while thigh-high boots lent a spunky touch.

Sonata, the car that speaks the language of sophistication, inspired the designer to come up with Hollywood-ish silhouettes for evening gowns that spelled elegance and elan. Done in rich jewel tones, these gowns featured fluid draping materials and fabulous beadwork. Sleek and chic, Baddeo's Sonata collection was sophistication at its best.

White, the color of elegance and opulence, is Baddeo's interpretation of the XG's commanding presence. Pure, modern and classic all at the same time, Baddeo's evening wear basked in luxe materials like brocade and intricate lace fashioned to perfection. The collection was a triumph of craftsmanship and meticulous detail.

The night ended with rounds of applause for Baddeo's creations, which, everyone agreed, beautifully complemented and enhanced the new Hyundai cars.

WHITE DELIGHT. One-sided top in fortuny fabric paired with high-waist pantaloon with beadwork detail

LEATHER IS BETTER. Haltered shimmering lycra top paired with leather wrap skirt and thigh-high boots

LUXURY IN WHITE. Abbreviated lace tank paired with hipster slim pants in charming brocade and long lingering train

NIGHT LIGHT. Fully beaded haltered evening gown with peek-a-boo detail on the waist and long lingering train

BEAUTIES and the car—the Hyundai XG

EDDIE Baddeo takes a bow.

WE love chocolate, say women achievers Karen Santos, Bea Zobel Jr. and Sigalit Djemal

HOTSHOT PERSONAS. Shangri-La Makati GM Jarlath Lynch, Singapore Airlines' top asset Rita Dy and ADB guy Jim Lynch

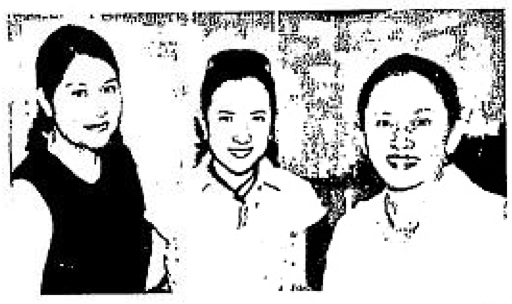
Life can also be like . . .

From page E1

BREEZING in from cold London, super nice Mayo Cruz with his sister, articulate Candy C.

WOMEN OF POWER. Stock exchange lady boss Vivian Yuchengco with Red Cross chair Rosa Rosal

CHOCO LOCO GALS. Mons Tantoco, Mia Borromeo and Margarita Delgado



AYALA'S female contingent. Winnie Nazareth, Rowena Tomeldan, Myrna Fernandez, AC Ocampo and Chocolate Bar owner Ruth Velasco Co.

cao"), a way of enjoying hot chocolate.

Game KC Montero did the first suck from the suckao, followed by Mr. Spitfire **Boy Abunda**, eliciting "oohs" and "aahs" from the watchers.

Max then introduced the hug mug, a cute ceramic mug shaped like a boat without a handle, "If you have no one to hug... there's always a hug mug," says Brenner, earning applause from everyone.

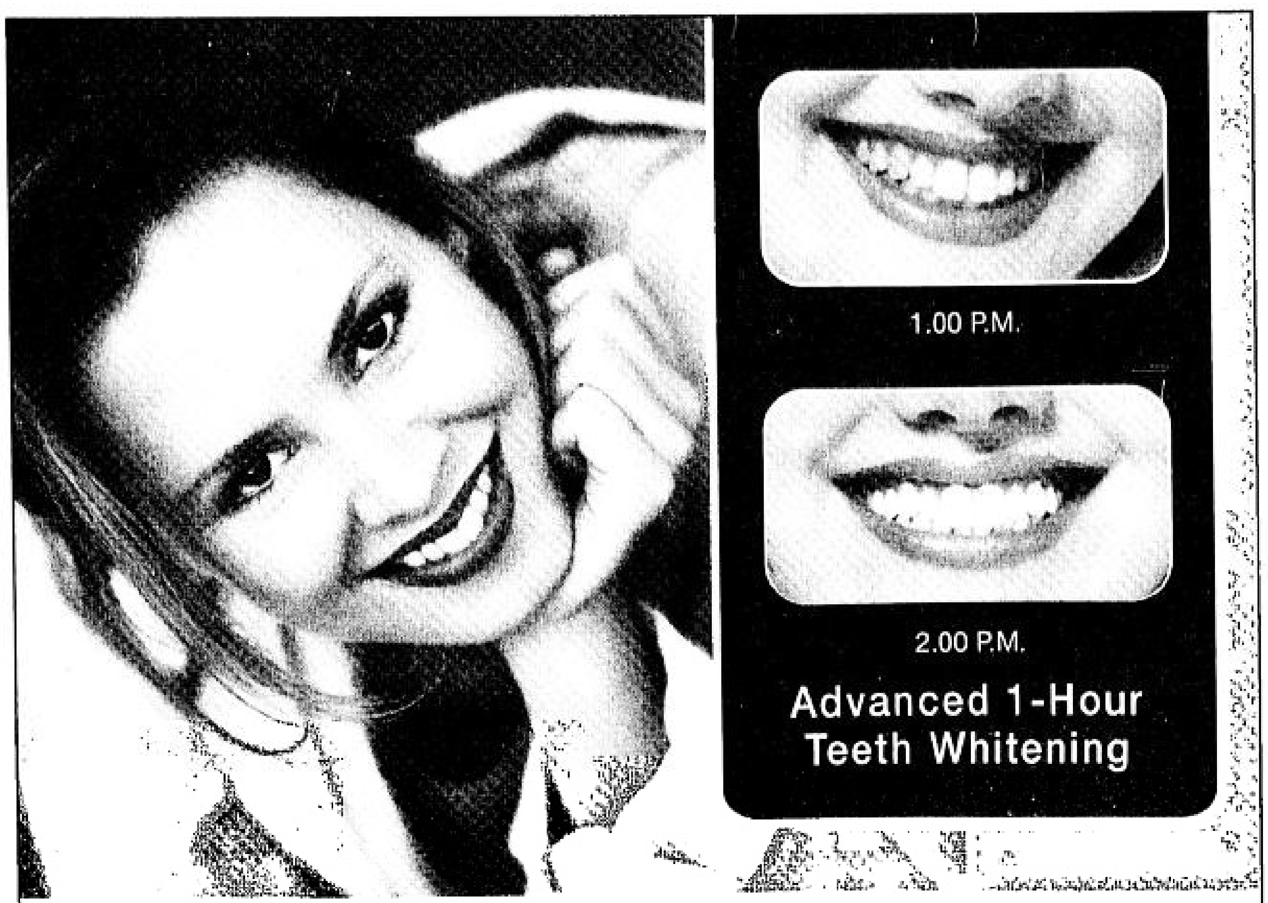
The fashionably delectable "Armani of Chocolates," Max Brenner's Chocolate Bar love affair with chocolate led to the opening of his first store in Australia and later Harrods in London, then Singapore, Canada and now the Philippines.

Ahh, but the big hit which tons of invitees brought home was Max's "Magnet Box" that magnetizes lovers as they melt together the sinfully sweet chocolate in their mouths, which definitely will heat up a romance.

Yes, *palanggas*, there's always a sweet story behind every mmm, de-li-cious chocolate bite.

And with every bite, you'll taste the latest rages in the culinary world of Europe that use delicious chocolate on meat, chicken and even salads, completing the Chocolate Bar's excellent menu.

LIFE/ E4



1.00 P.M.
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Nestlé
Carnation
Sweet Holidays

Mango Feather Cake

18-20	pieces broas or lady fingers
1/2	cup Nestlé All Purpose Cream
1	cup CARNATION CONDENSADA
1/2	cup butter
2	pieces ripe mangoes, cubed

For the topping:

2	pieces ripe mangoes, thinly sliced or in wedges
1	box Nestlé All-Purpose Cream, chilled and whipped

1. Line a 9" x 9" or 8" x 8" square pan with a layer of broas.
2. Using a double boiler, cook the CARNATION CONDENSADA with Nestlé All-Purpose Cream until thick. Stir in the butter and diced mangoes. Cool.
3. Pour half of the CARNATION CONDENSADA and Nestlé All-Purpose Cream mixture over the broas and cover with another layer of broas. Repeat the same process and top with whipped cream and mangoes. Chill until set.

Papaya Cups

1	cup ripe papaya, cubed
1	medium-sized ripe mangoes, cubed
1	cup pineapple chunks
1/2	300 ml. can CARNATION CONDENSADA
1	big ripe papaya

1. Combine all fruits in a bowl and drain juices well.
2. Stir in CARNATION CONDENSADA and chill. To prepare papaya bowl, slice whole papaya lengthwise, scoop out meat and put fruit salad into hollowed portion.

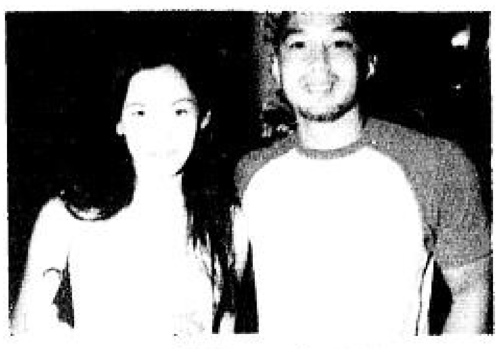
For questions/comments or to request for other recipes from Nestlé: Call the Nestlé Care Center at 898-0061; Visit the website: www.nestleclub.com.ph or www.goodfood.com.ph

PALS. British Embassy's Steve Dolan and Katy Parker with Pepper Teehankee

MELISSA Lopez, vacationing from Paris, with entrepreneur Raul Manzano and prince of alta moda Inno Sotto

SOCIALITE Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas, Renato Balestra, Madam Khunying Finola Chatamra, Madam Khuying Priyangsri Watanakun and Dr. Kris Chatamra, personal doctor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit

MMMM. Eyecatchers Maricar Lim and Dina Devries enjoying sinful chocolate helpings



COZY TWOSOME. Attractive Maike Evers and model Paolo Caballin

Life can also be like . . .

From page E3

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Dizzying month for Baby

The tireless philanthropist and civic oriented socialite **Rose Marie "Baby" Arenas** was on a whirlwind trip for over a month. After a quick trip to the United States to bring her only daughter **Rachel** to Harvard, then she was off to Italy where she attended the beatification of **Mother Teresa.** Next stop was Shanghai where Baby attended the concert of the grand maestro **Andrea Bocelli.**

Faster than you could bat an eyelash, she rushed back to Cosmo Manille to be one of the principal sponsors in the wedding of television personalities **Julius Babao** and **Tintin Bersola**.

The following day, she was off to Bangkok, one of the chosen invitees for the affair of the prestigious Thai Red Cross Society with no less than the Queen of Thailand as guest of honor.

Her Majesty, the beautiful Queen **Sirikit** of Thailand, presided over the fundraising chi-chi gala dinner that presented the fabulous creations of world-renowned fashion designer **Renato Balestra** of Italy, whose collection was specially made for this affair, dahlings.

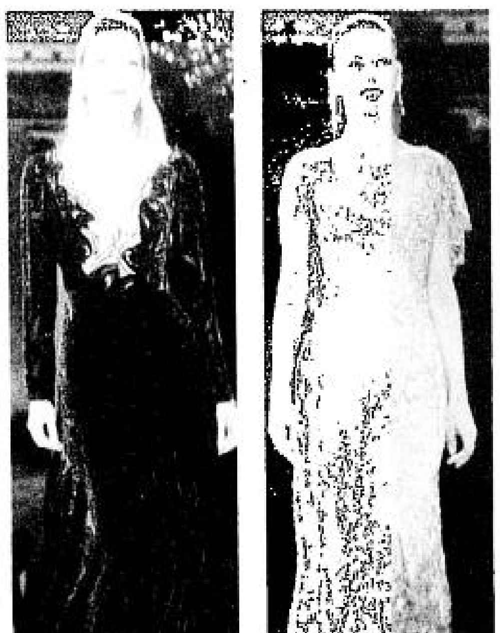
It was a strictly formal, black-tie, long-gown event and all the hot shots, in accordance with protocol rules, were seated 30 minutes before the arrival of the Queen.

The wow! fashion show titled Glittering Balestra was a collaboration between the Thai Red Cross Society and the House of Renato Balestra Haute Couture. All the proceeds from the event were for the benefit of Queen Sirikit's Centre for Breast Cancer Memorial Hospital. It was held at the Grand Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental Bangkok (but where else, *palanggas?*), which was adorned with crystal candelabras enveloped in Thailand's one-of-a-kind orchids.

The Balestra collection, worn by both Italian and Thai guest models, had the audience applauding like forever.

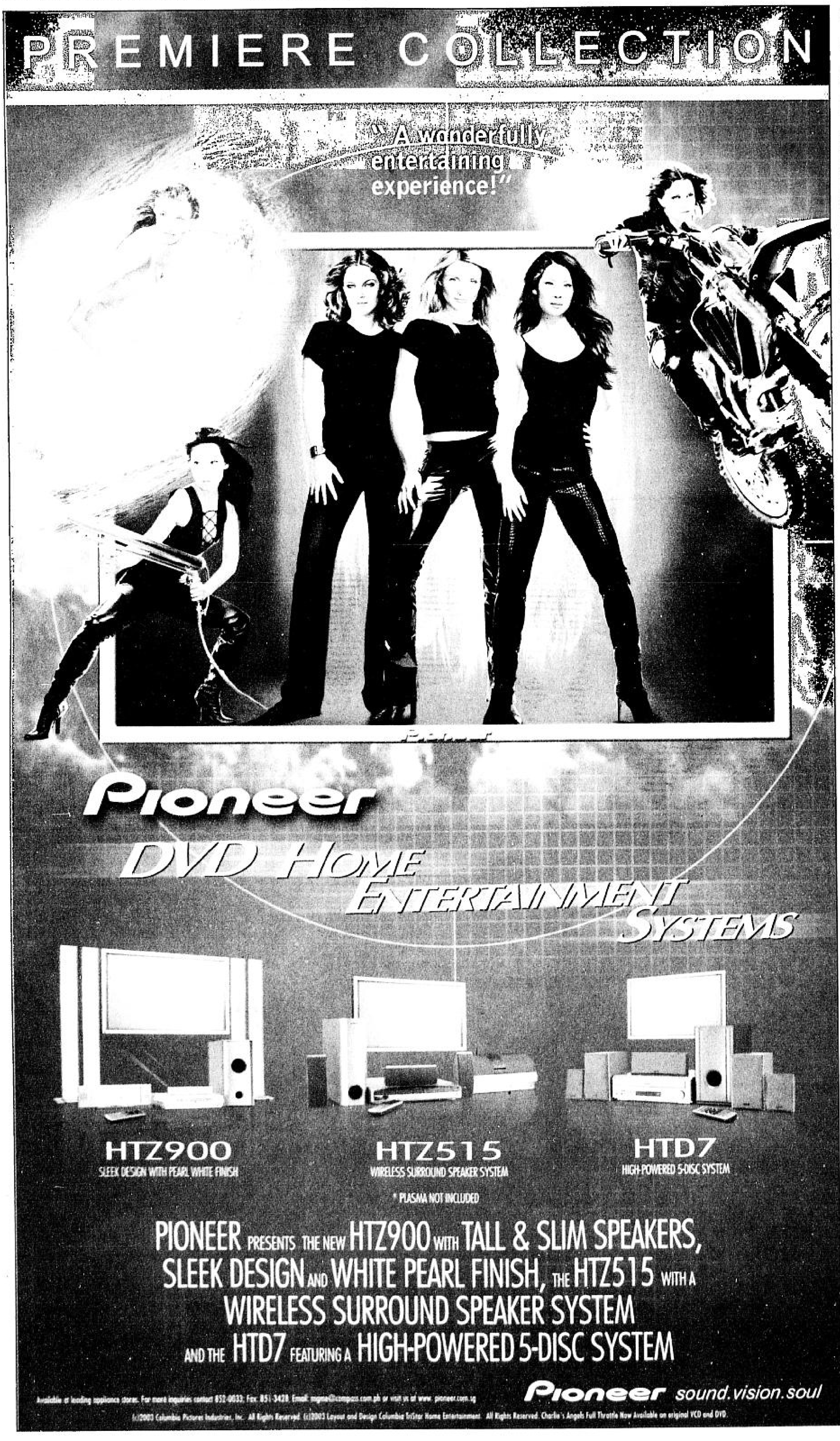
Needless to say this grand affair was graced by the creamies of the cream of Thai society, headed by Queen Sirikit, who was every inch a royalty. The chair of the organizing committee was **Thanpuying Thavika Sarasin.**

It definitely was truly a night of glitter, glamour and grace! And naturellement, the country was ably represented by the one-of-a-kind Baby Arenas, *palanggas.*



TWO of Renato Balestra's classic creations presented at the Red Cross ball in Thailand

HER Majesty Queen Sirikit handing out awards to the sponsors of the successful show



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